

Jordan Times

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People's Party demands settlement freeze

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Palestine People's Party (PPP) will withdraw from the Middle East peace talks if the fourth round in Washington does not tackle the issue of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, according to the party's secretary general, Bashir Al Barghouti. Mr. Barghouti said the Jordan Times that PPP representatives Ghassan Al Khaz and Samir Abdallah would be withdrawn if the fourth round failed to tackle this important issue. "We insist that the question of Jewish settlements in Arab lands be discussed and we receive international guarantees that settlements would stop," said Mr. Barghouti, former head of the Palestine Communist Party. Mr. Barghouti expressed concern over Israeli proposals of setting up municipal committees in the occupied territories and stressed that his party also opposed the adoption of a new negotiating plan tackling easy matters first. The creation of municipal committees will undermine the Palestinian delegation's mission, Mr. Barghouti said. He said his party regarded the bilateral talks as another means of struggle to ensure the freedom of the Palestinian people, but insisted that the settlement issue be discussed as a priority.

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Fourth round of bilateral talks begins, rotating around settlements, loan guarantees

From Lamis K. Andoni in Washington

AS THE fourth round of Arab-Israeli bilateral talks started on Monday, congressional debate intensified over linking a \$10 billion loan guarantee for Israel with a halt of Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who started a testimony on the issue before a congressional hearing on Monday, has already asked the Palestinians not to take any step that could jeopardize American efforts to attach conditions to the guarantee. Israel has requested to absorb Soviet Jewish immigrants. Palestinian delegation members have stated publicly and privately that the continuity of their engagement in the process will depend on a cessation of settlement activities. But, according to the Palesti-

nian sources, Mr. Baker has already warned the Palestinians against pulling out from the talks or stipulating that the settlement issue should be resolved before moving on to other items on the agenda. Mr. Baker conveyed his view during a meeting last Thursday with the head of the steering committee of the Palestinian delegation, Faisal Hussein. "Mr. Baker said that the Palestinian insistence on discussing the settlements will not lead to an immediate freeze on settlements," one source said. "Instead, he suggested that Palestinians should come up with 'real and substantial proposals' to promote the process."

The sources said that Mr. Baker told Mr. Hussein that the final deal with Israel on the loan guarantees will not be clear until mid-April, consequently advising the Palestinians meanwhile to remain engaged in the process. During the meeting, Mr. Baker did not make any promises nor did he reveal anything about the course of the American-Israeli negotiations over the issue, the sources said. The Palestinians remained undecided on how to proceed if the current round of the talks did not clarify the future of Israeli settlements. "They (the Americans) are asking us to be patient but how can we explain that to the Palestinians back home who do not see any progress or hope in end to the Israeli suppression and occupation?" asked one prominent Palestinian delegate summing up the Palestinian delegation's dilemma. At the first session of Monday hearing Mr. Baker was attacked by some of Israel's supporters in Congress for attaching the loan guarantees to a halt to the settle-

ments. At one point he was challenged to impose similar conditions to financial grants given to Arab countries such as an end of the Arab boycott of Israel. An apparently irritated Baker replied that Israel was the only government asking for \$10 billion guarantee over and above its annual aid. The first session of the congressional hearing indicated concern in Congress that the loan guarantees will not be at the expense of American taxpayers and will not contribute to the expansion of Israel's settlement activities. The concerns, mostly expressed by the head of the appropriation committee, David Obey (D-Wisconsin), clashed with pro-Israel congressmen's arguments that a cessation of the settlements was a prelude to force Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders. Mr. Obey countered that a halt

on the settlements was a separate issue from a final agreement on the future of the occupied territories. At the beginning of the hearing Mr. Obey said that he was ready to cooperate in providing the loan guarantee if there were assurances that the American budget will not be affected and if the guarantees do not undermine American policies. "Any upfront costs are going to have to be borne by the recipient in order to assure that there is no budgetary impact here," said Mr. Obey. "Secondly I think that it is going to reflect agreement between the administration and Israel on the issue of settlement activity for as is said (on Friday) it will not do that in anyway which will undermine U.S. policy or contributes in any way to the expansion of settlements in the

U.S. position drops a bombshell into talks

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — U.S. Secretary of State James Baker threw a bombshell into Middle East peace talks as they resumed on Monday, demanding a total Israeli settlement freeze in exchange of \$10 billion in loan guarantees. Minutes after delegates from Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestinians arrived at the State Department to resume negotiations, Mr. Baker finally revealed his position on Israel's request for loan guarantees to finance the mass immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union. It was certain to please Arabs but provoked an open crisis with Israel, possibly marking a break

Sharif Zeid meets PLO official

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker received in his office Monday Yusef Abu Basma, a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and reviewed with him the Middle East peace process and coordination between Jordan and the PLO as well as among all Arab parties in the region. The meeting, which was attended by Foreign Minister Samir Al Tayeb and Palestinian Ambassador Al Tayeb Abdul Rahim, also reviewed developments in the region.

Tunisian foreign minister due today

AMMAN (Petra) — Tunisian Foreign Minister Al Habib Ben Yahya will arrive in Amman Tuesday on a three-day visit to Jordan during which he will hold talks with senior Jordanian officials on the latest developments in the region, the Middle East peace process and the Palestinian problem. The visit aims at enhancing Jordan-Tunisian relations in various fields and Arab-Arab relations in view of the various international developments.

Journalist murdered in southeast Turkey

ANKARA (AP) — A gunman shot and killed a reporter for a pro-Kurdish newspaper in southeastern Turkey on Monday, Anadolu news agency said. Cengiz Altin was the second journalist for a pro-Kurdish publication to be killed in the area in a week. Mr. Altin, a local correspondent for the Istanbul-based weekly newspaper "Yeni Ulk" (New Country), was shot six times from behind in broad daylight in the provincial centre of Batman, Anatolia said. Mr. Altin reportedly died on the spot, and the shooter escaped on foot.

De Klerk sets referendum date

CAPE TOWN (R) — South Africa's President F.W. de Klerk brushed aside right-wing objections on Monday and announced he would hold a referendum on democratic reform on March 17. He said in a statement that three million white voters would be asked to say "Yes" or "No" to the question: "Do you support continuation of the reform process which the state president began on 2 February, 1990, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiations?"

Sheikh Zayed meets Sudan's Mirghani

DUBAI (R) — President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) met the leader of Sudan's opposition Democratic Unionist Party, Mohammad Osman Al Mirghani on Monday, the Emirates news agency (WAM) said. WAM said Sheikh Zayed and Mr. Mirghani, whose party was banned with all other political organisations after the military coup of 1989, discussed Arab and Islamic issues.

Berne to extradite Iranian to France

BERNE (R) — Switzerland said Monday it had agreed to extradite to France an Iranian suspected of helping the killers of former Iranian Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar in Paris last August. The federal justice and police department said in a statement that Zia Sarhadi, 25, would have 30 days to appeal against the decision to the Swiss supreme court. Mr. Sarhadi was arrested outside the Iranian embassy in Berne on Dec. 23, on an Interpol warrant issued in Paris.

Iraq dismisses human rights report

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said Monday a U.N. report accusing Iraq of the worst human rights violations in 45 years was full of lies. "The report is part of a political propaganda campaign against Iraq with the aim of achieving what military aggression failed to do," said a Foreign Ministry statement carried by the official Iraqi News Agency.

Sharif Zeid calls on officials to help citizens

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday voiced the government's keen interest in solving problems facing the citizens and urged ministries and government departments to facilitate bureaucratic procedures for the citizens in various fields. Sharif Zeid, who was visiting the ministries of health and agriculture, called on government departments to fully cooperate with the citizens.

Jordan has excellent legislation, providing assistance and services to the citizens without any complications in procedures, he said.

Sharif Zeid stressed the need for the Ministry of Health to extend health services to people with limited and low incomes in the various parts of the Kingdom. The prime minister was reassured on measures taken by the Ministry of Health to counter the spread of polio in Jordan. Sharif Zeid visited the operations room supervising the vaccination campaign which the ministry started Monday.

At the Ministry of Agriculture, Sharif Zeid called for adopting a constant agricultural policy that would not be affected by government changes or officials in the agricultural sector.

He said more attention should be paid to the agricultural sector because Jordan is an agricultural country.

Sharif Zeid urged officials at the ministry to respond to the needs of farmers according to the available capabilities in order to increase the national agricultural output.

He pointed out to the importance of the contributions of farmers as well as the citizens in cultivating land and in minimising their dependence on the government.

He also urged officials to be in contact with farmers to be familiarised with their needs and problems facing them so as to assist them within the available resources, particularly those whose agricultural produce, animal wealth and agricultural equipment were affected by the adverse weather conditions during the past weeks.

The prime minister stressed the importance of providing training for those working in the agricultural sector, especially agricultural consultants and guides who have direct contact with farmers.

Sharif Zeid was briefed by Agriculture Minister Fayez Khasawneh on the ministry's activities, programmes and plans.

Dr. Khasawneh briefed the premier on measures taken by his ministry to help farmers affected by the recent frost wave.

Sharif Zeid was also briefed by Health Minister Aref Bataineh on the ministry's role in providing health services to citizens.

Lebanon wants to send more troops to U.N. zone

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanon pressed the United Nations on Monday to let more Lebanese army troops deploy in the U.N. zone violated by Israeli forces last week, officials said.

U.N. Undersecretary-General Marrack Gouding, visiting Lebanon because of the latest fighting, told reporters he always favoured expanding Lebanese army control in the south but it had to be done "cautiously and progressively."

Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bouez, one of three Lebanese leaders to see the envoy, said he did not think the United Nations was opposed in principle to expanding Lebanese army control in the south.

But a suitable mechanism had to be found to meet the interests of both sides, he added.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali sent Mr. Gouding to Lebanon after Israeli troops brushed aside U.N. peacekeepers in the south on Thursday on a search-and-destroy operation to stop guerrillas firing rockets at Israel.

The Israeli forces pulled out on Friday after pitched battles with guerrillas that failed to end the rocket attacks. Eight U.N. peacekeepers were wounded during the incursion.

Pro-Iranian guerrillas pounded northern Israel with rockets for

much of the week to avenge the killing by Israel of Hizbollah (Party of God) leader Sheikh Abbas Musawi. One rocket killed an Israeli girl on Friday.

The rocket attacks have since stopped and hundreds of guerrillas have withdrawn from the frontlines in the south.

Mr. Gouding, in charge of U.N. peacekeeping operations, discussed the south with Mr. Bouez, President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Omar Karani.

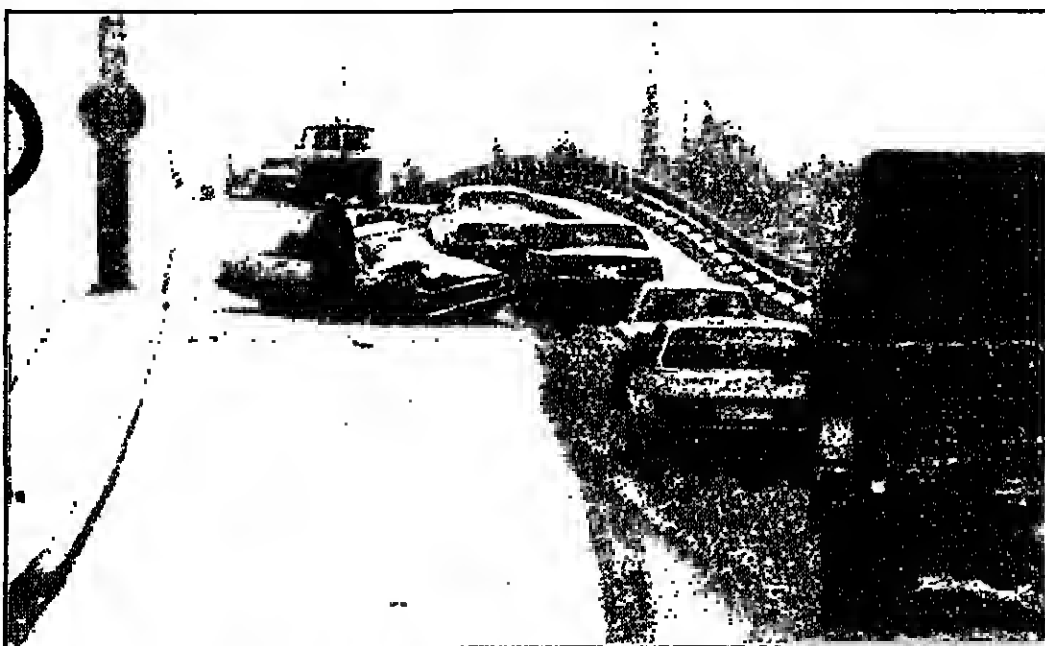
It related developments, a Shiite Muslim leader said Israel's killing of Sheikh Musawi breathed new life into the anti-Israeli struggle; and a radical Iranian newspaper warned of a renewed round of hostage-taking in Lebanon.

Shiite leaders have agreed to stop rocket assaults on Israel. Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens warned Sunday that Israel would retaliate if rocket attacks were renewed.

In the eastern Bekaa Valley's town of Baalbek, Shiite leader Hussein Musawi said Israel's killing of Abbas Musawi — a distant cousin — "instilled new life into the struggle of the Islamic nation."

Mr. Musawi, quoted by Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), called the assassination

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MORE TO COME: More snow is expected Tuesday mainly on the hilly regions of Jordan due to the effect of a cold depression, which was Monday centered over Cyprus, according to the Department of Meteorology. The department said that rain and snow with high winds would

continue, extending from the northern regions gradually to the central and the southern regions of the Kingdom. Temperatures will remain around zero degrees Celsius. Photo above shows cars trying to manoeuvre through slippery roads. Photo by Youssef Al 'Ali

Israel has 'special squad' for torture

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli police squad is using electro shock and severe beatings to force confessions from Palestinians suspected of throwing stones in the occupied West Bank, a newspaper said Monday.

The report in the Hadashot daily was the first time such accusations have been made against police in the occupied territories and involving such common actions as stone throwing, which is usually carried out by teenagers or young men.

Hadashot, quoting police and security sources, said the five-member unit has operated for about a year, inflicting most torture in a police station at military headquarters in the West Bank town of Hebron.

Police spokeswoman Tami

Paul-Coben confirmed a special unit investigates stone throwing incidents in the West Bank. But she denied allegations of abuse.

In the past, Israeli and foreign human rights groups have accused Israel of mistreating Palestinian prisoners, but they usually blamed the Shin Bet security service. Israel has denied interrogators go beyond rules allowing some physical pressure.

Hadashot police reporter Doron Meiri said Monday's report began 10 days ago when his paper ran affidavits by eight Palestinians, including a 14-year-old, who said they were beaten and tortured by electro shock while jailed in Hebron.

After the publication, Mr. Meiri said, he was contacted by several police officers and security officials in Hebron who were

not connected with the special unit, but were familiar with it.

Hadashot quoted the sources, who insisted on anonymity, as saying interrogations usually took place at night when only a few people were at the police station.

The sources told Mr. Meiri the interrogators beat detainees with wooden clubs, kicked them severely and administered electro shock using a field telephone.

"Once in a while I would arrive early in the morning in an office where they had interrogated detainees, and it looked like a battle field," one source told Hadashot. "Broken wooden clubs, wires, blood. More than once I saw a detainee crawling to the (holding cell) ... they were simply unable to walk."

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Israeli security guard shot dead in Jenin

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A masked assailant shot and killed a private Israeli security guard Monday in the occupied West Bank and made off with the guard's Uzi sub-machine gun, army officials said. The attack came hours before Israel and Palestinians were to renew peace negotiations in Washington.

At about 9:30 a.m. (0730 GMT), a masked man walked towards the Israeli guard at a gas station in the town of Jenin and fired several shots, the army and Israel radio said.

The Israeli was struck in the chest, the army said. The attack came just after the guard had climbed down from a fuel truck he was accompanying.

Troops imposed a curfew on Jenin and launched a wide search

in the city, which was frequently been the scene of shooting attacks against Israelis and suspected Palestinian informers.

Bob Lang, spokesman for Jewish settlers in the occupied territories, demanded a new settlement be created to protect the slaying. Israel Radio said the far-right Tzomet party proposed cutting off fuel supplies to Jenin in retaliation.

Settlers demanded Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir order the conversion of the Giant army outpost two kilometres west of Jenin into a settlement housing an initial 250 families.

"This is the only Zionist answer to the murder this morning in Jenin," the Council for Jewish Settlements said in a telegram to Mr. Shamir.

Algerian opposition assails cabinet changes

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Algerian opposition politicians on Monday denounced a government reshuffle as reneging on pledges to bring radical change to a country shaken by Muslim fundamentalist unrest.

As the cabinet held its first meeting with six newcomers after the departure of 11 ministers, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) said: "The authorities have turned their back on their own statements on a radical change of institutions and men."

The FFS emerged with 25 seats from a general election cancelled last month days before the scheduled second round, after the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) took a landslide lead of 188 seats of 231 decided.

Two newcomers to the cabinet are linked to the FIS. Employment Minister Said Guecbl, a founder member of the

FIS, was pushed aside by radicals last year. He said on Sunday he would try to be an intermediary with the party now facing dissolution.

Most key ministers, including Prime Minister Sidahmad Ghozali, have retained their posts.

The former ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) termed Saturday's reshuffle a "positive" but "very modest step."

The FFS, in a statement carried by the Algerian news agency APS, said the move disappointed the people's aspirations for "an uncompromising rupture with the single party system, corruption and injustice."

It also condemned what it termed the "repressive system" of the state of emergency imposed last Feb. 9 after running battles between security forces

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Official silence over ban of alcohol resolution raises questions about government's stance on the issue

By Mariam M. Shahin Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A resolution adopted by the Lower House of Parliament last week to demand a ban on alcohol in the Kingdom has been met with total silence by the government. The official "non-reaction" has raised questions about the government's position on and handling of the issue.

While cabinet members say that the government is not a supporter of a ban on alcohol for economic, social and cultural reasons, no attempt was apparently made to unify the government's position

and if there was one it failed. Of the 10 cabinet ministers who hold seats in the House — two voted for the resolution while two others walked out apparently in order to avoid casting a vote.

The ambivalent message this divided vote gave was "meant to be so," according to some government sources.

Government insiders say that there is no reason for the government to get caught up in spot battles with Parliament, and Islamists in particular, over the banning of alcohol at this early stage of the issue.

"The majority of the cabinet ministers eligible to

vote adopted the government's position by voting against the ban," said Minister of Industry and Trade Abdullah Nsour, who is also a deputy from Salt. The minister, however, played down the significance of the issue, calling the vote "not decisive, since we were voting on a resolution not a law."

The absence of 26 deputies during the vote almost caused a delay in the voting since the required quorum for voting in the 80-strong House is 54. The resolution was passed nevertheless by a vote of 34 to 20.

(Seven deputies were

either out of the country or ill, and did not attend the session at all).

The apparent cabinet "silence" on the issue, despite a possible loss of a JD 25 million industry, could stem from confidence in the argument against banning.

"The government's policy is to adhere to scientific facts," explained a cabinet minister. "If a certain suggestion or request by Parliament is not feasible, then the government will not just say 'we are against it,' but will present the scientific evidence to prove it."

"The facts speak for themselves; with a JD 25 million

industry at stake it is not in the government's interest to ban alcohol," said another member of the cabinet.

But the economic reason is not the sole justification the government will use to oppose such a ban, according to most members of the cabinet.

"In this country we have a tradition of tolerance. Our willingness to consider the ban is also a sign of that tolerance," said a senior cabinet minister. "But the point is that we have tolerated the habits and traditions of minorities, religious,

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Ekeus says no agreement reached in Baghdad mission

NEW YORK (Agencies) — A senior U.N. official has said he was unable to secure an agreement from Iraq to cooperate with weapons inspectors and carry out other terms of the Gulf war ceasefire agreement, a radio station reported.

"I have not accomplished the mission, which was to secure such an agreement by Iraq," said Rolf Ekeus, head of a U.N. commission overseeing the destruction of Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes.

"However, Iraq may send delegations to New York later on... and something may come out of that," said Mr. Ekeus, speaking from Baghdad in a telephone interview with the CBS radio network.

Mr. Ekeus held high-level meetings with Iraqi officials, carrying a warning from the U.N. Security Council that Iraq faces "serious consequences" if it continues to obstruct disarmament efforts.

The 15-nation council last Wednesday said Iraq's failure to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors, disclose information and agree to future monitoring nearly a year after the end of the Gulf war represented a "material breach" of ceasefire terms.

About 30 U.N. inspecting teams have visited Iraq to date, but the Security Council complains information they have

gathered is incomplete because of Iraqi stonewalling and efforts to hide weapons components.

U.N. officials have not ruled out the use of force. U.S.-led allies sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council ended Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in an offensive that ended last Feb. 28.

In Baghdad, Mr. Ekeus said he told Iraq Sunday it faced serious consequences if it failed to comply with Security Council plans to scrap its weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Ekeus said he relayed the contents of a Security Council resolution to the Iraqi leadership in five hours of talks on Sunday night.

"I would say they were serious talks," Mr. Ekeus said, but he declined to give further details of the tone of his discussions before reporting to the Security Council next week.

He was speaking to reporters after the final round of talks in a three-day visit, his third trip to Baghdad.

Mr. Ekeus said he briefed Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein Al Khudayir and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz on the Feb. 19 council statement warning Iraq to comply with its plan.

"We had an exchange of views. The (U.N.) mission has presented the contents of a statement by the Security Council of Feb. 19 as well as other con-

cerns," Mr. Ekeus said. He gave no more details.

He said his team and the Iraqis each made a statement on the dispute, which would be sent to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali and the Security Council.

The United States has accused Iraq of showing disdain for U.N. programmes to scrap the weapons which Iraq had assembled before the Gulf conflict as well as plans to scrutinise long-term Iraqi arms output.

Baghdad has rejected as a violation of its sovereignty any attempt to monitor its arms production and says national defence is the sovereign right of every nation.

It argues that it faces armed rebellion by Kurds in northern Iraq and Shiites in the south and suspects that the United States is trying to use the U.N. to topple President Saddam Hussein.

Iraq says it has cooperated with visiting teams of U.N. experts seeking to destroy its weapons and wants Mr. Ekeus to make a positive report to help its campaign to get 18-month-old trade sanctions lifted.

Sanctions were imposed in August 1990 to punish Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait. Iraq says that they should now be lifted because it has left the emirate and is helping to destroy its arsenals as specified in the Gulf war ceasefire terms.

Bush secretly helped Iraq build its arsenal — report

LOS ANGELES — President George Bush signed a top-secret directive opening the way for \$1 billion in new aid to Iraq only nine months before that country invaded Kuwait, according to a report published on Sunday.

The Los Angeles Times, in a special report, said Mr. Bush's actions enabled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to buy needed foodstuffs on credit and spend his scarce reserves of hard currency on the massive arms buildup that resulted in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990, and the ensuing war.

In addition, the paper said, senior Bush aides as late as the spring of 1990 overrode concern among other government officials and insisted that Iraq be allowed to buy "dual use" technology — advanced equipment that could be used for both civilian and military purposes.

Quoting unnamed sources and classified government documents it had obtained, the newspaper said the Iraqis were given continued access to "dual use" technology despite emerging evidence that they were working on nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction.

It said Mr. Bush signed a secret national security decision directive in October, 1989, ordering the billion-dollar commitment to Iraq in the form of loan guarantees for the purchase of U.S. farm commodities, despite objections from the Department of Agriculture and two other agencies who warned that existing aid was being diverted to buy weapons.

After the directive was signed,

the paper said, Secretary of State James Baker personally intervened with then Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter to drop his department's opposition to the aid. Mr. Yeutter agreed, and the first half of the money was made available at the beginning of 1990.

As late as July, 1990, just one month before the invasion of Kuwait, officials at the National Security Council and the State Department were pressing for the delivery of the second instalment of \$500 million.

On July 9 U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie assured officials in Baghdad that U.S. officials were still trying to obtain release of the second instalment, the newspaper said. That instalment was cancelled the day Iraq invaded Kuwait.

It said much of the blame for failing to perceive Iraq's plans has fallen on mid-level officials and on agencies such as the Commerce Department, which approved the sale to Iraq of \$1.5 billion of American technology, and the Agriculture Department, which authorised \$5 billion in loan guarantees in the 1980s.

"However, classified documents from several agencies and interviews over the last two months demonstrate that it was foreign policy initiative from the White House and the State Department that guided relations with Iraq from the early 1980s to the eve of the Persian Gulf war — and that Bush and officials working under him played a prominent role in those initiatives," the Times said.

Snow hits Israel, occupied territories

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Heavy snow fell in northern Israel and the occupied Golan Heights Monday, closing roads and isolating villages.

A dusting of snow also covered occupied Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. Rain and hail fell along the coastal plain, threatening possible flooding in Israel's most populated areas.

Officials also expressed fears of flooding along the Jordan River after the Deganya Dam sluice gates at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee were opened to prevent the lake from filling and flooding the town of Tiberias.

Now the outflow of six million cubic metres of water threatens to cause the swollen Jordan River to crest.

In the northern Galilee, the town of Metulla was hit with about 50 centimetres of snow. The weight of snow and ice collapsed the roof at a skating rink used for training by the national hockey team.

Residents of the nearby settlement of Kiryat Shmona, who spent the past week under the threat of Katyusha rockets fired from South Lebanon, woke up Monday under about 20 centimetres of snow.

In some places on the Golan Heights 50 centimetres of snow fell, Israel Radio reported.

In occupied Jerusalem, residents seem to have adjusted to normally rare snowfall. Shops and businesses remained open, and students went to school.

UNEP warns Gulf states of potential water conflict

BAHRAIN (AP) — The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) chief warned Gulf countries Monday that sparse water and the absence of proper conservation could push the region into conflict over resources.

"With water in such short supply, and with demand growing, the shared resources are a potential source of conflict," Mustafa Tolba, told a conference in an address that was delivered by his deputy, William Mansfield.

The U.N. Environment Programme, he said, helped countries in other regions dispel potential water conflicts by developing water management systems. He did not elaborate on what these systems entailed.

Water sharing is one of the regional problems being tackled in multi-party talks involving Israel, the Arabs and several other countries and alliances on the sidelines of the Middle East peace process. Gulf states took part in the multilateral talks which opened in Moscow last month.

Mr. Tolba said desalination plants on which Gulf states have spent billions of dollars were not an answer to the problem.

"It may appear attractive, but ultimately the cost may be prohibitive — not just the economic cost, but also the ecological cost," he said.

"No one has yet developed a desalination process that does not require massive in-

puts of energy," Mr. Tolba said. "Until they do, we must be aware that we may be buying water today at the cost of hotter, dryer tomorrow, such as could be caused by global warming."

He said: "The only option which offers any real hope for the future is conservation."

Egypt: Nile not negotiable

An Egyptian minister said in an interview published on Monday that the waters of the River Nile were beyond the scope of the Middle East peace process.

"The River Nile is not the subject of bargaining or political agreements regarding any future (Middle East) peace plan," Minister of Irrigation Essam Radi told the semi-official Abu Dhabi newspaper Al Itihad.

The Nile is the world's longest river, running 6,650 kilometres from its source in Central Africa to the Mediterranean. Its annual floodwaters have supported cultivation in Egypt for millennia.

The Egyptian minister also said Cairo had turned down a Libyan request to lay a 645-kilometre pipeline to siphon water from the Nile in north-eastern Egypt to Tobruk in Libya.

Mr. Radi told Al Itihad that work would start soon on the first phase of the Jonglei Canal in southern Sudan, a project to save water which now disappears into the swamps there.

Qadhafi: Libya fears U.S. strike

PARIS (Agencies) — Fear of a massive U.S. military strike has convinced Libya it must cooperate in investigating the bombings of U.S. and French airliners, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi said in an interview published Monday.

Col. Qadhafi, in an interview in Tripoli with the French daily Le Figaro, said his government was not involved in the bombings of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 or of a UTA jetliner over Niger in 1989.

"We immediately protested and proclaimed our innocence," Col. Qadhafi was quoted as saying. "But very quickly, we understood that we were confronted by virtual state terrorism and that the Americans wouldn't hesitate, to launch a massive military operation."

"America today is the number one military power in the world and isn't counterbalanced by anyone," Col. Qadhafi reportedly said. "An armed confrontation would crush us. We are aware of the danger. That's why we prefer to play the card of conciliation and justice, rather than of defiance..."

Mubarak to go to France over Lockerbie dispute

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will go to France on Tuesday as part of his mediation in the dispute between Libya and Western states over the bombing of passenger planes, officials said on Monday.

Mr. Mubarak's visit, apparently arranged at short notice after he spoke to French President Francois Mitterrand by telephone on Sunday, will be brief and to the point, they said.

Egypt, which has good relations with Libya, has been seeking a compromise between Tripoli and the Western states demanding Libya hand over men wanted in connection with explosions aboard a Pan Am plane in 1988 and a French airliner in 1989.

Mr. Mubarak met Libya Justice Minister Ibrahim Mohamed Bakkar immediately after his unannounced arrival in Cairo late on Sunday and Mr. Bakkar gave Mubarak a message from Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. No details emerged from the meeting.

Egypt, which has moved closer to Libya over the past three years after more than a decade of political enmity, has said its diploma-

cy averted possible military action against Libya.

But it is now concerned at French, British and U.S. threats to impose U.N. sanctions on Tripoli if it does not abide by a Security Council resolution calling on Libya to surrender the men for questioning or trial.

The sanctions would include an arms embargo, a ban on civil aviation links with Libya and a scaling down of Libyan diplomatic representation.

Arab diplomats said Egypt has recently been putting pressure on Libya to come up with terms acceptable to the West.

Libya, they said, offered the West via Egypt on Thursday to hold the trial in a neutral country but the proposal has not been accepted.

In December the United States and Britain accused two Libyan men of planting explosives aboard the Pan Am airliner which blew up over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing 270 people.

France wants Libya to produce four agents for questioning about a French UTA airliner which exploded over Niger in 1989, killing all 171 people on board.

Iran lifts ban on neutral ships

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran has lifted a ban on shipping in its territorial waters that it imposed at the start of the 1980-88 war with Iraq, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday.

The respected oil industry newsletter said the Iranians have cancelled the military exclusion zone they declared around their shores.

That prohibited non-Iranian vessels from entering the Islamic republic's waters or those around its islands in the Strait of Hormuz, the only gateway in and out of the Gulf.

"The cancellation of these regulations will undoubtedly ease the free flow of cargo, including oil, to and from Iraq as well as in and out of the Gulf waters," the Nicosia-based weekly commented.

MEES did not say when the wartime regulations were lifted. But Iran had reaffirmed the restriction as recently as Jan. 15.

The newsletter said Tehran has given no reason for the surprise move.

But the Iranians have been relaxing many security and economic regulations in recent months following the Gulf war last year.

Tehran is also striving for foreign investment and improved trade links to revitalise its moribund economy.

Under the wartime regulations, any ship entering or leaving the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz had to make a 130-kilometre detour to pass south of the Small Iranian Islands of Abu Musa and Sirri.

These were used during the 1980-88 war by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' naval arm for attacks on tankers sailing to and from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf states allied to Iraq.

"Shipping will now be able to sail in a more direct route by passing north of these islands inside Iran's territorial waters," the survey noted.

signed an agreement with Tehran and the International Committee of Red Cross to swap remaining prisoners-of-war (POWs) from the Iraq-Iran war which ended more than two years ago.

The government daily Al Jumhouriya quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying the accord, signed in Geneva last week, was a "comprehensive agreement to exchange all the POWs and lists on names of the missing or any available information about them."

Iraq and Iran exchanged more than 70,000 prisoners of the 1980-88 war after Baghdad and Tehran agreed to make peace shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Iran says some 5,000 of its soldiers are still held by Iraq which accuses Tehran of holding some 30,000 Iraqi POWs.

The exchange of the first group of POWs would take place in the coming few days at the border check-point of Khosravi, the paper quoted the official as saying.

Secret or over the counter, tapes represent freest speech in S. Arabia

RIYADH (AP) — In every Riyadh neighbourhood, tucked somewhere between the pizza stand, the barber and the shirt-maker, sits one of the Islamic tape shops that have become the main outlets for government critics.

Over-the-counter tapes feature clergy admonishing Saudis how to be better Muslims. But under the counter, anonymous clerics pour out a diatribe against everything from princes skimming government money to peace negotiations with Israel. Since the Gulf war, the tapes have flourished and their messages have become harsher.

The clerics ask: why doesn't the kingdom have a published budget? Why do princes get free services, from phone calls to airplane flights? Why did a multimillion-dollar annual defence budget leave the kingdom dependent on the United States in the fight against Iraq?

Tapes criticise princes of the Al Saud family for reaping huge commissions simply for occupying their positions, noting that Islam specifies that money should be earned.

Salman Al Owdah, an Islamic studies professor in the central city of Buryday, is especially popular for his forthright criticism of Muslims in general and the government in particular.

On other tapes, "secular" is a favourite curse, used to label anything tied to the West, from advertising to smoking cigarettes to educating women.

One extremist tape said university women are whores who use education as a cover to meet their lovers.

"If the secular don't accept to live under Islam, they can get out. This is the holy land," admonished one anonymous cleric.

The brave, forthright approach of the clerics has gained them a

following even among the non-religious. The tape shops also give Islamic movements a distinct edge over liberal groups who lack a similar means of spreading their ideas.

Saudi journalists say the tapes can be found everywhere. Bearded men in their teens or early 20s pour into the shops, every afternoon, looking for the latest hot speeches.

Most of the anonymous tapes bear the accent of the Nejd, the desert heartland where zealous Islam has flourished.

The U.S. government report in 1991 notes the tapes are Saudi Arabia's main outlet for free speech, which is otherwise sharply curtailed.

The cassettes are a sensitive issue — Saudi customs agents confiscated three from a reporter leaving the country. The 1979 revolution in neighbouring Iran that toppled the Shah gained momentum from tapes of speeches by then-exiled Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In Saudi Arabia, the pitch of criticism reached such a level by the end of last year that the country's highest religious figure, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ben Abdullah Ben Baz, felt obliged to speak out against those who counter the will of God by resorting to "backbiting and slander."

Diplomatic and Saudi sources say about 50 clerics were brought in for questioning last month, and some of them lost their right to preach in mosques.

King Fahd himself warned in late January that "if matters go beyond their limits, then we will deal with them."

Saudi lawyers said after that speech that the circulation of under-the-counter tapes dropped markedly and that people could get a six-month prison sentence for being caught with one.

Rising ethnic tensions make Afghan accord urgent

By Malcolm Davidson
Reuters

ISLAMABAD — Rising ethnic tension in Afghanistan has increased the danger of the country splitting apart and a political settlement of the country's 13-year conflict is urgently needed, according to a senior United Nations official.

Special envoy Benon Sevan told reporters the independent states of former Soviet Central Asia feared ethnic conflict could spill over Afghanistan's northern border.

"All these ethnic issues... are coming to the fore now and unless we proceed speedily and unless the

Afghans speedily can resolve their differences they are going to face a serious problem in respect to the integrity of Afghanistan."

Mr. Sevan, who is trying to get all sides in the war to start talks at a meeting in Europe in April, said years of war had politicised Afghan ethnic groups previously dominated by the Pushtun majority.

He said leaders of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan voiced their concern about the war spilling over into their territory during talks in Tehran last week.

They denied they were continuing to arm their former allies in Kabul and backed a United States-Russian cutoff of weapons to both sides that took effect on Jan. 1.

Afghan President Najibullah is currently locked in a battle of wills with northern Afghanistan's government generals and militia commanders who are resisting his plans to impose an ethnic Pushtun general on the mostly Uzbek and Tajik region.

Pushtun activists are also talking again about a greater Pushtunistan that would include large tracts ceded to what is now Pakistan under British colonial rule.

Mr. Sevan, speaking before leaving for Riyadh on Sunday and talks with U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali in Geneva, said he had been convinced by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that he was genuinely committed to the U.N. peace plan.

Mr. Sharif caused confusion at a regional summit meeting in Tehran last week when he appeared to back-track on a recent Pakistani statement giving complete support to Mr. Sevan.

Some Mujahideen guerrilla groups based in Pakistan are refusing to take part in the April gathering in Vienna or Geneva and might try to sabotage the process, Mr. Sevan said.

"These voices I believe may try to scuttle the process, may even try to delay the process, but the process has begun and there is no one that can stop the process because the Afghan people themselves will resist any stopping of the process."

Three headline groups among Mujahideen have

spearheaded resistance to Mr. Sevan, while some remain undecided.

"We have a lot of humming birds waiting in flight to see which way to go," Mr. Sevan told reporters that once the first ice-breaking meeting of around 150 people takes place in Europe, a much larger gathering should be held inside Afghanistan within two months.

That meeting would be empowered to create an interim government to take full power in Kabul and hold elections within about a year.

"I think that once everybody sees that there is a first gathering there will be an added incentive for them to join the process," he said.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
18:00	Boul
18:30	Les Tortues Ninja
18:30	Mari et Sophie
19:00	News in French
19:15	Varieties
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:30	News in Arabic
20:30	Evening shade
21:10	Golden Years
22:00	News in English
22:30	G.B.H.
PRAYER TIMES	
6:50	Fajr
12:30	(Sunset) Dhuhr
14:55	Dhuhr
17:20	Asr
18:30	Maghreb
	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish, Tel. 810740	
Assamblia of God Church, Tel.	

632785	St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
	Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
	De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
	Terranova Church Tel. 622366
	Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
	Assamblia Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
	Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
	Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261
	St. Euphrasie Church Tel. 771751
	Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
	Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255
	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 823824, 654932
	Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691
WEATHER	
Bullshit supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
It will remain cold, cloudy and rainy, with snow falling on hilly areas with an elevation of 600 metres and more.	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Ghaleb Zawadeh	736123
Dr. Isam Al Asmar	803594
Dr. Saad Ali	780285
Dr. Hisham Kanaan	790286
Farm pharmacy	661912
Ferdow pharmacy	778336
Al Asena pharmacy	670553
Nairokh pharmacy	623672
NIGHT DUTY	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Emergency	630341
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	891228
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	63021
Hotel Complaints	603800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	661646
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	775112/26
Complaints	787111

Al Salem pharmacy	636730
Yaoum pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
REBID:	
Dr. Maaza Ghazalbeh	(—)
Al Sharaa pharmacy	(273825)
ZARQA:	
Dr. Samir Al Lawad	(—)
Khalifah pharmacy	985417

HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Husseini Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalid Matar, J. Amn	642816
Al-Sha Matar, J. Amn	624612
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	664174
Palatania, Shmeisani	664174
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	84564
Al-Munir Hospital	667279
The Islamic, Abdul	666127/27
Al-Ahli, Abdul	664166
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	771013
Al-Bashir, J. Adnash	775112/26
Army, Marzi	891611/15

FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (05)3200-5, where it should always be verified.	
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
05:00	Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
07:30	Aqaba (RJ)
08:30	Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:30	Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:30	New York, Montreal (RJ)
11:30	Frankfurt, Belgrade (RJ)
12:30	Tripoli (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
13:10	Riyadh (SU)
13:35	Beirut (ME)
14:05	Backrest (MS)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
07:30	Aqaba (RJ)
08:30	Bussch, London (RJ)
09:30	Tripoli (RJ)
10:30	Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:30	Belgrade, Madrid (RJ)
12:30	Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:30	Rome, Madrid (RJ)
14:30	Geneva, Paris (RJ)
15:30	Jeddah (RJ)
16:30	Dubai (RJ)
17:30	Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
18:30	Larnaca (RJ)
19:30	Damascus (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
12:30	Paris (AF)

09:55	Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:55	Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:00	New York, Montreal (RJ)
10:35	Frankfurt (RJ) (RJ)
10:45	Tripoli (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
13:10	Riyadh (SU)
13:35	Beirut (ME)
12:45	Bucharest (MS)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights	
(Terminal 1)	
07:40	Aqaba (RJ)
10:30	Bamshi, Madrid (RJ)
10:40	Tripoli (RJ)
11:00	Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:10	Belgrade, Madrid (RJ)
11:45	Amman, New York (RJ)
11:45	Rome, Madrid (RJ)
11:50	Casablanca, Paris (RJ)
20:40	Jeddah (RJ)
20:45	Dhahran (RJ)
20:50	Dubai, Dubai (RJ)
21:15	Luxembourg (RJ)
21:15	Damascus (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
12:00	

Britain will not ease sanctions on Iraq, official says

By Sorena Halse
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A senior British official on Monday reaffirmed his government's determination not to ease the sanctions against Iraq, but declined to say whether London was ready to implement such measures against Israel in the context of a regional disarmament and the Middle East peace process.

"Iraq is an aggressive nation, armed to its teeth, pursuing the production of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction," said David Gilmore, the undersecretary of the British Foreign Ministry. "Therefore, the sanctions against Iraq are absolutely vital."

Sir Gilmore, on a three-day visit to the Kingdom, refrained from answering a question on whether the same measures would be taken against the Jewish state in the future if it did not comply with United Nations resolutions and continues to pursue its aggressive settlement policy. "There is no golden rule that says you have to deal with all problems the same way," he said. "The British government has done a great deal to alleviate the

suffering of the Iraqi people," Sir Gilmore said, referring to the 45 million pounds in humanitarian assistance to Iraq. "We have no quarrel with the people of Iraq. It is up to Saddam Hussein to feed his people."

Sir Gilmore said Iraqis must make their own choice of leadership, but did not stop short of expressing approval in any attempt to topple the Iraqi president. "We would be delighted to see Saddam Hussein go," he said. Sir Gilmore, in an obvious bid to justify the Israeli possession of mass destruction weapons said Israel was constantly a "subject of aggression."

During his stay in the Kingdom, Sir Gilmore was received by His Majesty King Hussein, the prime minister, the foreign minister, and a number of high Jordanian officials. The two sides discussed a wide range of issues including the ongoing peace process which resumed in Washington on Monday.

"We are using what little influence we have to make the peace talks work," Sir Gilmore said. "There is no alternative to the peace process. This region needs peace very badly and we would do everything we can to help push



Sir David Gilmore, undersecretary of the British Foreign Ministry, Monday meets with Prime Minister Shariq Zeid Ben Shaker and reviews the

Middle East peace process and other issues (Petra photo)

the process forward."

Sir Gilmore described the current relationship between his country and Jordan as "excellent."

"We had an open and frank dialogue on all levels in the Jordanian government," he said. As to the strain in the relationship between Amman and London during the Gulf crisis, Sir Gilmore said that thanks to efforts from both sides, "the friendly and close happy relationship has been reestablished."

Referring to the role of the United States as a co-sponsor to the talks, Sir Gilmore said: "The Americans have tremendous influence, interest, and commitment in the region and have demonstrated their commitment to bring about peace."

Asked whether the sponsorship should be shifted to the U.N. Security Council floor, he said, "It is foolish to change the course now. It is important not to divert from the central thrust, at least for the first time in history all the

conflicting parties are sitting together."

Sir Gilmore said during his visit to Israel and the occupied territories that he sensed a feeling among many Palestinians he met with that they saw no alternative to the peace process. He also acknowledged that many Palestinians, including members of the peace delegation, were under a lot of pressure. He did not elaborate.

Sir Gilmore will leave Amman today for a brief visit to Syria.

Queen Noor heads for meeting to focus needs of rural women

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor left for Geneva Monday at the head of a Jordanian delegation to participate in a two-day meeting dedicated to discussing means of improving the standard of women in rural regions of the world.

The Queen is accompanied by a delegation including Sharif Fawaz Sharif, Jordan's permanent representative at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, Upper House of Parliament member, Laila Sharaf and the director general of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Inaam Al Mufli.

The Queen will be joining a group of ladies from around the world at the conference, whose main idea is to help prevent millions of rural women from sliding into poverty due to the burdens of raising families alone.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which is organising the gathering, said queens, princesses and wives of L.A. of states and governments are meeting Tuesday and Wednesday to call attention to the growing problems of rural women in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Queen Fabiola of the Belgians, patron of the meeting, held a preparatory session Monday with the six organisers, the wives of the leaders of Egypt, Turkey, Colombia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Senegal.

The organisers estimate that 565 million rural women are living in poverty, and that few of the world's aid programmes are reaching them. A survey conducted by the Rome-based International Fund for Agricultural Development found 66.2 million of the impoverished women are the sole heads of households.

In the past 20 years the number of impoverished women has grown by 50 per cent, outpacing the 40 per cent general population growth.

"The leading cause of the increase has been the migration of males to urban areas inside the countries and male migration to richer nations overseas, mostly in search of work. Other causes are low dowry, divorce and the disintegration of family bonds under

socio-economic pressures," an IFAD spokesman said.

Among the main topics for discussion will be how to help rural women get access to credit. A small loan can enable a woman to start a small business, but organisers say women often are denied credit because of legal obstacles or prejudice.

The wives of the heads of the seven wealthiest countries — Germany, Japan, Britain, France, Canada, Italy and the United States — have turned down invitations. The G-7 countries will mostly be represented by diplomats.

Among those who have sent their regrets were Barbara Bush and Marilyn Quayle, who are helping their husbands' campaign for re-election in the United States.

However, among those who are coming are Queen Sofia of Spain, the Grand Duchesses of Luxembourg and princesses from Sweden and Liechtenstein.

Bontros Ghali, the new secretary-general of the United Nations, will lead representatives of U.N. agencies in attending the meeting.

The two sides agreed on exchanging information and publications on health education and agreed on matters related to medical study, including training of Libyan nurses in Jordan, the statement noted.

Under the agreement, the Health Ministry in Jordan will arrange for Libyan patients to acquire treatment at Jordanian hospitals, the statement noted.

With the present rate of Jordanian medicines exports to Libya, according to a statement issued at the end of the talks.

The statement said that the two sides agreed on promoting cooperation through the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), which will dispatch a team of specialists to Libya to discuss cooperation in the maintenance of medical equipment.

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Tamimi in Tehran to discuss bilateral relations

AMMAN (Petra) — Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Izzeddine Al Khatib Al Tamimi is currently in Tehran for talks with Iranian officials on bilateral relations between Jordan and Iran.

The minister left Amman for the Iranian capital late Sunday on a several day working visit on the head of an official delegation in response to an invitation by Iranian Cultural and Religious Guidance Minister Sayyed Khatimi.

Mr. Tamimi said before departing that he will convey a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Iranian President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani. The message, he said, deals with brotherly relations between the two countries.

While in Tehran, Mr. Tamimi will meet with Iranian ministers and senior officials for talks on enhancing bilateral cooperation. The minister said that he will also discuss with the officials the condition of the Palestinian people in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the issue of Jerusalem and Israeli measures to Judaize the city.

In this regard, Mr. Tamimi said he will convey to the Iranian officials Jordan's keenness to preserve the holy places and will affirm to them Jordan's continued supervision of Islamic affairs in the occupied territories despite obstacles placed by the Israeli occupation authorities.

WHAT'S GOING ON

- ★ Art exhibition by Spanish artist Saad Esheiri at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Shakh Hasan Al Said at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery (10 a.m.-5 p.m.)
- ★ Graphic art exhibition by Sadik Kwalish at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street.
- ★ Exhibition of photos depicting historical and archaeological sites in Jordan at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of publications by the University of Jordan's Scientific Research Deanship at the university.

FILMS

- ★ English-subtitled German film entitled "Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle" (Everyone on His Own and God Against Everyone) at the Goethe Institute — 8 p.m.
- ★ French film entitled "En Tante Innocence" at the French Cultural Centre — 8 p.m.

Jordanians continue to fume over fuel price increases, most industrialists say they won't pass increase to customers

By Nur Sati
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians expressed anger over the new rate of fuel prices which took effect Sunday, saying that their already squeezed living expenses will become unbearably tighter.

At the same time, industrialists are recalculating the costs of their products in an attempt to tackle the heavy burden they may face.

"One of our main concerns is with the medical representatives," said Rana Dajani, marketing planning manager at Hikmah Pharmaceuticals. "We use cars to run around the country to promote our products," she explained, implying that the company may have to ease up on their promotion campaign.

The 35 per cent increase used in industrial processes for manufacturing the products means that the overheads will increase accordingly, she said. "We are not planning to increase the prices on our medical products," Mrs. Dajani told the Jordan Times, "but what it means is more on the overheads and a loss of profit."

There are certain plans and schedules that the company has to abide by. "We have to manufacture and sell our products and bear the burden," she said.

Most industry officials say that the increase in fuel prices is making the industry uncom-

petitive with other industries in neighbouring countries. The officials say that there has already been an increase in the prices of water, electricity and a 2 per cent increase in the cost of exports. The move "is not helping the industry," the government should deregulate and not put hurdles in our way," according to Fawaz Shaalan, general manager at Paintex.

"If the idea is to make the economy healthier, then the only salvation could be from our \$1 billion in exports," he said. "If we can have a good growth on the \$1 billion, it may support half of the total cost on the economy."

Like many other businessmen, Mr. Shaalan is recalculating his prices. He said that many industries have already absorbed additional increases such as the consumption tax three months ago. "If we review our prices, it is due to those incremented by the government," he said.

Mr. Shaalan said this move would further erode the competitiveness of Jordanian industry. The extra costs will eventually be passed on to the consumer, he said.

Mustafa Khomash, assistant managing director at a cement factory, told the Jordan Times that the factory will take certain measures in order to cope with the recent decision. "We are now working our power plant three hours daily, in the peak hours, so that we could

minimise on the fuel consumption," he said.

Mr. Khomash added that the fuel increase is not going to drastically affect the cement factory. "It will only affect us slightly," he said.

Two years ago, the government increased fuel prices by 30 per cent for heavy industries but the light industries were excluded from this move. "Now the government has raised the price of fuel oil, but it has hit those industries that were excluded from the decision two years ago," he said.

Another worry for industrialists is the increased costs to trucks and other vehicles used to transport goods. Other industries maintain that their prices will not alter because some factories include a 10 or 15 per cent margin in their prices already. According to Tareq Haddad, director of Haddad International Industrial Company, "the 35 per cent increase will not effect our prices as already included a 10 per cent margin in our products — it is not a major crucial factor," he said.

The government decision, which went into force Sunday, has raised the price of a tonne of fuel used in industrial processes to JD 65 from JD 41, a 6 per cent increase over the previous rate for trucks driven by diesel oil inside and outside the Kingdom, as well as an increase in price of a litre of first grade gasoline oil to 300 fils

and a litre of diesel oil to 105 fils.

Although the public said they have no choice but to try and minimise their money spent for fuel for cars and heating, they were angered by the recent government move, specifically the statement that said that households using diesel oil for central heating can claim compensation of JD 100 at the end of the year if their salaries do not exceed JD 300.

"First of all, if my salary is JD 301, I am not included in the compensation claim," said Aref Mansour, a father of five. "I do not see a big difference between JD 300 and JD 301."

Although Mr. Mansour was citing an example, his salary, he said, is not sufficient. "I have five children and a wife who have to be fed, clothed and educated. This 40 per cent increase on fuel will ring me dry."

Many people interviewed by the Jordan Times asked how the government will check whether a household who is liable to claim compensation is actually using the central heating system. "I know many of my neighbours who said that they will use kerosene instead of central heating and then claim the JD 100," according to Hannan Naser. "It is impossible for the government to check every single household."

While kerosene is excluded from the decision, many other

people are hesitant about using the fuel. "I know of many stories where people suffocated themselves or got burned because of the kerosene heaters," said Rima, who declined to give her full name. "I have found myself in a dilemma now because I want to avoid using kerosene, for fear that my children may have an accident, and my husband cannot continue to afford central heating."

Mr. Khomash, from the cement factory, said that the category that will most likely be affected from this measure is the middle class income bracket group who use central heating in their households. Some other people were upset but pointed out that Jordan was under a lot of difficulty and the public should help their country. "We know Jordan has to take measures so it can survive," said a shopkeeper in Sweifeh. "We should stand together every step of the way. Everything is increasing in prices."

"People just cannot go on like this. There must be other ways of achieving self reliance and replenishing the treasures foreign currency reserves but this new measure is a decision by the government, they should know what is best for the country. Maybe in the short-term we will suffer and in the long-term it may be better for us," the shopkeeper said.

Mothers, children line up for polio vaccinations

AMMAN (Agencies) — Long lines of mothers with their young children were reported Monday outside health centres and hospitals operated by the Health Ministry in different parts of Jordan to acquire anti-polio immunisation at the start of a week-long nationwide campaign ordered by the government.

The campaign was organised as news spread about the outbreak of polio among children, mainly in the Jordan Valley region.

Health Ministry officials said that the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) has provided the centres with 1.2 million doses of anti-polio vaccines, sufficient for the immunisation of 600,000 children between one and five years of age.

Dr. Zeid Kayed, director of the Health Department in the Amman region, said that hospitals and health centres in the Amman area were crowded by women and children since early morning. This turn out, he said, reflects the awareness among members of the public about the need to safeguard children's health and the realisation of the dangers of polio.

The Health Ministry Saturday

reported the appearance of 32 polio cases in Jordan since December, noting that the virus must have been carried into the country by a visitor.

Reuters reported that tens of thousands of mothers and children crowded at hospitals and clinics Monday for vaccinations which are offered free of charge.

"What we are facing is a limited outbreak of polio, but we are dealing with it as if it is an epidemic in order to stop it as soon as possible," Adnan Abbas, secretary-general of the Health Ministry, told Reuters.

Polio is a viral infection of the central nervous system that may result in muscular paralysis or death, especially in children. "We are still investigating the reasons behind the outbreak and nothing is confirmed yet," Dr. Abbas said.

Jordan borders Syria, Iraq and Egypt, countries where polio is endemic. Some officials suspect the virus may have been brought to the Jordan Valley, where most of the cases have been detected, by immigrant labourers.

Others say it could have travelled among the million-plus refugees who escaped Iraq and

Kuwait through Jordan during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

Jordanian health officials are investigating the cause of the outbreak with help from the Centres for Disease Control in Atlanta and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"A will international scientific bodies suggest that what we are doing is the required measure to stop the outbreak," Dr. Abbas said.

A 1990 Health Ministry-UNICEF study said Jordan's programme against childhood killer diseases, including polio, vaccinated 98 per cent of children before their second birthdays.

"This level of coverage is recognised as very good both in the Middle East and internationally," Dr. Abbas declared.

Dr. Abbas said on a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the polio vaccine given to children was proved to be 85 per cent effective and there was no truth in rumours that the previous doses were of no value.

Dr. Abbas cited the testimony of two foreign experts from the United States and a third from the World Health Organisation supporting the ministry's claim.

International seminar to discuss applications of solar, wind energy of solar, wind energy

AMMAN (J.T.) — An international seminar on promoting solar and wind energy is to be organised in Amman in April with the participation of large numbers of experts from 70 nations around the world, according to a statement by the Royal Scientific Society (RSS).

The delegates to the meeting, organised under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, will discuss a number of topics related to technology policies with regard to solar and wind power used on a commercial basis, said the RSS statement.

The 10-day seminar, held in cooperation with the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation, will also discuss renewable energy sources, the environment, and energy and development in the Third World, said the statement.

It said that the delegates will also turn their attention to applications of solar and wind power in the advanced nations, international cooperation in this kind of energy, the role of government in backing renewable energy research programmes and reports about experiments conducted by the participating countries.

During the seminar, the delegates will be grouped into work teams, each dealing with a separate aspect of energy and its

application in water pumping and other areas.

The RSS statement said that the seminar has been tentatively scheduled for April 7 and invitations to the participants being sent.

According to the RSS, the upcoming conference will offer a chance for participants to exchange experience and information in the fields of solar radiation, photovoltaic technology, thermal applications, bioconversion, passive solar architecture, heating and cooling hydrogen production and other fields related to renewable energy.

The meeting, to review a number of working papers, will include plenary lectures of research work with special sessions to be devoted to national papers, the RSS said.

The RSS has been experimenting with solar and wind power as in the past decade and in 1988 a solar-wind power project was opened at the remote village of Jurf Al Darawish by Crown Prince Hassan.

The RSS-sponsored pilot project was designed to generate electricity from solar and wind power, benefiting 600 residents of the village situated 170 kilometres south of Amman. That pilot project was also funded and carried out in cooperation with the German government.

Ministry to open quality seminar Saturday

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Industry and Trade is opening a two-day meeting in Amman on Saturday entitled "Quality Assurance and Economic Development" in cooperation with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

The ministry said in an announcement that the meeting, to be organised at the Amman Philadelphia Hotel, will tackle issues related to a Jordanian national standardization system to ensure quality of products.

The ministry said several working papers dealing with standards, quality and specifications will be reviewed by delegates representing the private and public sectors in Jordan.

Also taking part are representatives from the European Community, GTZ, the German Technical Academy, the German Federal Institute for Material Testing, the International Standardisation Organisation, the Jordan Trade Association, the Ministry of Industry and Trade's Directorate of Standards, the Ministry of Planning, the Occupational Safety and Health Institute, the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the French General Society for Surveillance.

Minister to attend satellite launch

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Telecommunications Jamal Al Sarraf will join other Arab ministers responsible for communications in their countries at a ceremony to launch the third Arab satellite from a French base in South America Wednesday.

The satellite, which will cost \$300 million to launch, should boost cooperation among Arab countries in telephone and television communications, officials said.

The two other were launched in 1985 and now in orbit will become obsolete during 1992, according to a ministry statement here.

The statement said that Mr. Sarraf left for Paris on the way to the launch site at Kourou in French Guiana at the invitation of the French government and the Arab Satellite Communication Organisation (ARABSAT).

In the statement before departure, the minister said he would hold meetings with Arab delegates attending the launch to promote cooperation with among Arab states in communications fields. He said his talks will cover means of promoting and expanding the fast mail services between Jordan and the other Arab states.

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* Tuesday, Feb. 25, University of Jordan (Tickets JD 1)

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Arab and Australian — shall the twain ever meet?

By Dr. Abe W. Ata

To be an Arab in Australia, and by extension in Western countries, is to be treated as an object of ridicule or suspicion. It is an assured way of keeping the bond of trust between Arabs — a racial, political and cultural misnomer — and the Australian community united. A misnomer begs the explanation that this word is conveniently manipulated to subsume individual national aspirations, such as the Palestinian, as well as the multi-polar political, historical, ethnic and cultural differences amongst 22 Arabic speaking states.

jolts people more: to say my child is autistic, or to say my husband is Palestinian/Arab."

The roots underlying this superiority-inferiority complex are both conscious and subconscious. During the last few years in particular, Australia's ignorance about the Arab World — its peoples, religions, culture and literature — has manifested itself in many stereotypical forms including cartoons, television, commercials, serials, songs, jokes, soap operas, dictionaries, and particularly the cinema. One commercial television station in Melbourne, for example, showed a total of 53 anti-Arab films between 1986-1989, including examples such as "Ashanti" (1979) or "Harem" (1985), but perhaps most striking in its simple archaism was "Never Say Never Again" (1984) where James Bond rescues a blonde from the clutches of a mob of lustful Be-

douins. Since the eruption of the Gulf crisis, the display of such films has (temporarily) ceased. Yet, the spectacle of so-called Arab princes and sheikhs gambling huge sums in casinos in London and Monte Carlo was an edifying one. There is every reason that ordinary Lebanese, Palestinians, Egyptians, Sudanese, Australians and others look upon it with distaste. No doubt oil revenues have given the populations of most — though not all — Gulf states an enviable standard of living and a degree of resentment in the West, and the East, towards the enjoyers of this "ill-earned" wealth.

There were, during the Gulf war, apologetic sounds of support to the Arab communities whose loyalty to Australia was repeatedly questioned, cross-examined or simply forced upon. But reports

concerning harassment, physical attacks and burning of property, threatening phone calls and inciteful leaflets were paramount. For example, one call on John Tingle's radio 2GB demanded "razing all the Muslims and their temples in Australia." On another radio talk calls for internment of any Arab-looking individual were a recurrent theme. In view of what was the norm in terms of the random vilification of Arab communities during the pre-Gulf war days, anti-Semitism is now an anti-Arab sentiment. A case in point, two days after the Russell St. bombing incident in the mid eighties, the well-respected "Age" read on the front page "an Arab-looking suspect was seen..." (The culprit who was charged later on was of North European extraction). Debate in Australia rages about how the Arab culture is studied with violence against itself.

Against this climate it is regrettable the way the Australian Navy during an exercise in the Gulf depicted Muslims praying in a laughable dramatization. The navy, after some hesitation, has since apologised, but the damage imprinted in the minds of millions of Australian viewers is doubtfully erased. It thus stands to reason that the negative attitudes and behaviour, which consciously or otherwise are directed at Arabs — be it from an employment organisation, funding body, or even Western immigration and customs officials, is a daily reality.

Racial hatred against peoples of the Middle East is double edged. On the one hand, "Islam is viewed to represent the threat of resurging destructive force threatening the Western order of democracy." (See Edward Sa'id's book *Orientalism*, published in New York in 1977).

The cultural, social, historical differences between Arabs and Australians are too wide, perhaps, to be even reconciled, but there is a desperate need for greater understanding, and this must be sought by both sides. The malignant but cherished Australian stereotype of the Arab must, without question, be sacrificed to this.

The writer is member of the La Trobe University / Albury Wodonga campus.

Again, time to think

JORDANIANS are going through the fifth snowstorm of the season and are probably wondering when their ordeal with the weather this year will all end. Being unaccustomed to severe weather conditions, and forced to stay indoors for relatively long periods of time, some Jordanians are seizing upon the opportunity provided to reflect on mundane matters such as the recent price increases on some categories of fuel. Others will simply hibernate socially, economically and politically for a couple of days and nights in search for peace of mind and an interruption of their daily preoccupations. In all, it is interesting to see how life in the country stands still all of a sudden at the first sight of snow flakes dropping on our heads. Snow becomes suddenly an excuse and a carte blanche for most people to sit idly by in anticipation of something better in the days ahead.

If it is the destiny of Jordanians to take time whenever harsh wintry days are upon us, there should be room also to meditate on our lot and reflect on where we are heading. Almost every day one encounters the reality of wrong situations and practices we find ourselves in or doing. Sometimes it is reflected in the way we drive: The way we never stop at stop signs, the way we make too-wide turns, the way we overtake other cars and the way we escape staying in the proper lane. On other occasions, signs of our underdevelopment as a society is given expression in the manner we teach our youngsters in schools, how we prepare them for the future. At the government level, bureaucracy, red tape and heavy centralisation are common features. Almost everything seems to be highly and disproportionately personalised and never institutionalised.

What all this boils down to — and what is most needed to be thought about — is that Jordan, like some developing countries, desperately needs intellectual technology to complement the mechanical technology that we have so proudly possessed in a relatively short period of time. Intellectual technology is of course a state of mind that is in part educational, part cultural and part religious. Europe reached the age of enlightenment only after people's minds were liberated and their potential released. Then and only then was true progress made, enabling the West to flourish like it never did before.

One often wonders silently whether there can be hope for the Arab World as long as it stays aloof from a parallel enlightenment movement in order to truly propel Arabs to a higher plateau of learning and reasoning. Is it possible that during the five snowstorms that the Kingdom was blessed — or hit — with as the case may be till now, we have of the need for a new era in Arab thinking that hopefully will snowball into something more solid and lasting than the snow that we have witnessed?

Climatologists speak of two more snowstorms awaiting the country. Could it be that nature is providing us with more opportunities to reflect and meditate instead of just simply hibernating as so many of us seem to be doing? We have to think about it, and remain optimistic at the same time.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al RA'i Arabic daily Monday praised the government of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker for its frankness and its disclosure of the reasons behind increasing fuel prices so that the public can realise the facts and help the government achieve the required economic reform. The paper said it is true that Jordan has been bearing the difficulties and economic problems over the past years but it is also true that Jordan can only adhere to its true principles and no bribe or any other temptation can distract the country and its leadership and people from the national course. We realise that as Jordanians we are bound to face further challenges and could be facing more economic problems, but we also realise that this country, which confronted challenges in the past, can survive the pressure, said the paper. It is because the government was frank and open in its statement about the economic situation and the need for hikes in prices of fuel that the members of the public are accepting the situation and the increases, said the paper. We have to offer sacrifices and we have to deal with the present situation if we are to keep our pride and retain self-dignity, said the paper. Jordan, it said, is used to conspiracies not only from the enemies of the country but rather from the friends and Arab brothers.

A COLUMNIST in Al RA'i Arabic daily called on the government Monday to make available various types of essential food supplies at prices within the means of the limited-income families, especially during the coming month of Ramadan. Nazih said that normally during Ramadan people tend to consume more food although people ought to fast in that month and avoid eating too much, according to religious teachings. The writer said that with the crops of the Jordan Valley arriving in a trickle due to the damage caused by the frost and the floods, and because meat is so scarce and eggs are almost non-existent, limited-income groups will find it difficult to get their needs from the markets during the coming month. He said that if the Ministry of Supply fails to honour its commitments and keep its promise of making available the essential commodities, the crisis is certain to be compounded. The writer said that two things are required: less consumption in the coming month and more intensive efforts on the part of the Ministry of Supply to help the poor citizens in the holy month of Ramadan.

French strategist forecasts 20 years of chaos

By Paul Taylor
Reuters

PARIS — The days when white men with nuclear weapons controlled the world are numbered, according to French strategic thinker Pierre Lellouche.

Far from ushering in an era of American dominance, the end of the cold war has created a far more unstable, multi-power world in which Third World states will increasingly wield both atom bombs and a demographic time-bomb, he argues in a new book.

"The end of the cold war is also the end of 500 years of European domination of the world," says Mr. Lellouche, strategic adviser to conservative opposition leader Jacques Chirac.

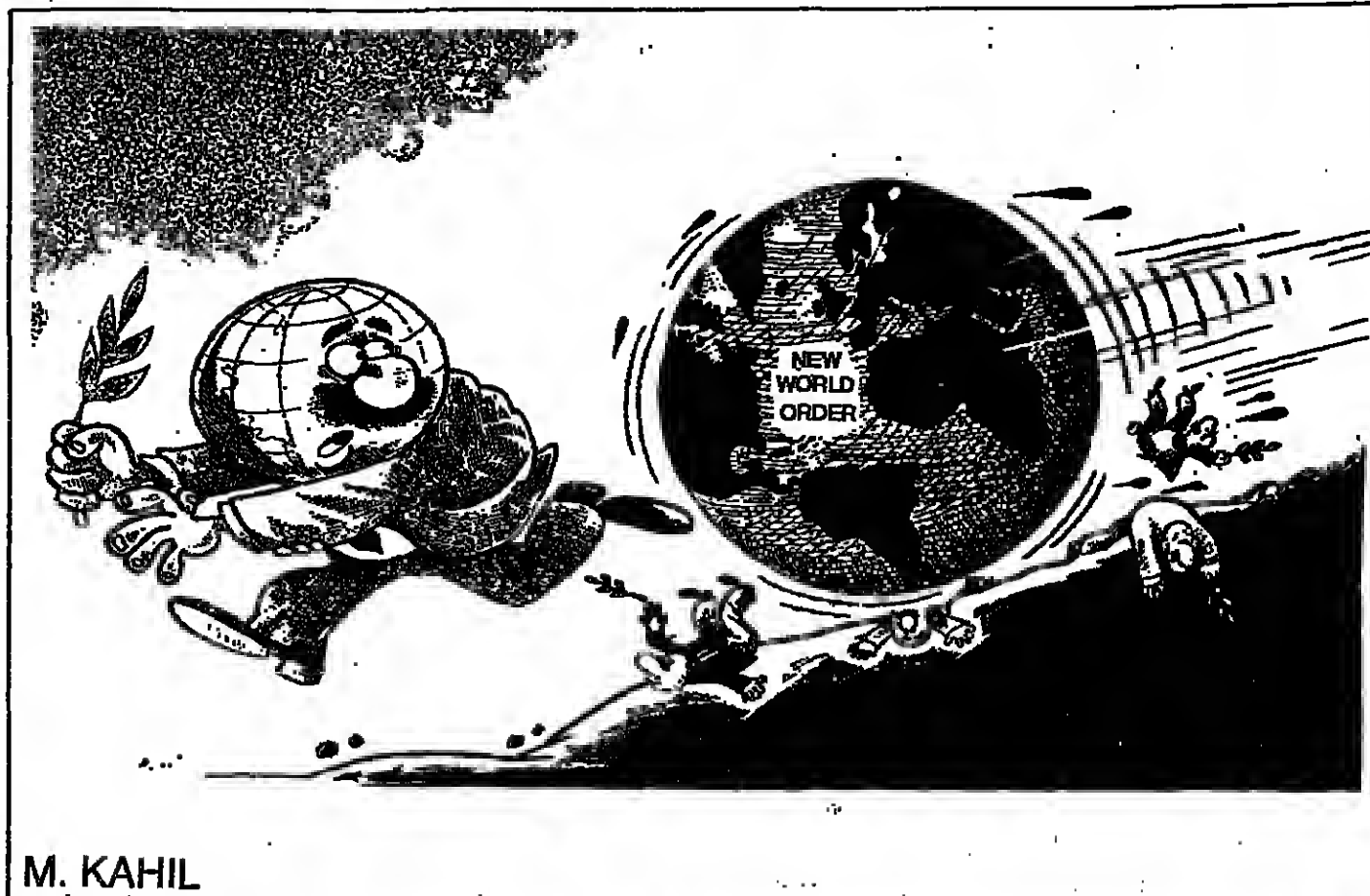
His book "The New World", subtitled "From the order of Yalta to the disorder of nations", forecasts 20 years of chaos in which U.S. power will be weakened by economic decline and isolationism while Europe is buffeted by nationalism and mass migration.

Japan will increasingly dominate Asia militarily as well as economically, he says, while the population explosion in Africa and the Asian sub-continent will present new global dangers.

Mr. Lellouche's vision of a "new world disorder" is in stark contrast to the "new world order" founded on western values of democracy, the rule of law and the market economy which U.S. President George Bush promised in the aftermath of the Gulf war.

"The almost touching attempts to preserve the geo-political status quo of the old world at any price constitute at best a very short-term holding solution," the French strategist writes.

Among the measures he belittles are the European Commu-



ity's attempt to shield itself from turmoil by building a rich men's club without the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. He is also sceptical of efforts to give the United Nations more power in world conflicts.

Mr. Lellouche argues that the triumph of capitalism over communism by no means ensures that either peace or democracy will prevail.

On the contrary, he sees growing danger from radical nationalism, ethnic strife and religious

fundamentalism which were partly held in check in the decades since World War II by the East-West conflict and the balance of nuclear terror.

The book offers a wide-ranging snapshot at a time when history, far from coming to an end in the words of American theorist Francis Fukuyama, appears to be accelerating.

Political writer and economist Alain Minc called the book "the most complete and subtle work of strategy since the fall of the Ber-

lin in wall."

Mr. Lellouche expresses alarm at the militarisation of the Third World, including the prospect of nuclear and chemical weapons spreading to countries that might not be amenable to deterrence.

He predicts heightened conflict in the southern hemisphere leading to mass migration as the population ratio between the rich North and the poor South of the world explodes from 1.5 today to 1.8 or 1.9 in the year 2025.

Only increased development

aid and investment to create jobs in the Third World stand a chance of warding off floods of economic migrants to the North, he says.

Mr. Lellouche lists 15 countries which he says either already have or are trying to develop nuclear weapons: Israel, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, North and South Korea, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Iran and possibly Taiwan.

He also points to the spread of chemical weapons, the "poor man's atom bomb."

Compounding the danger from conflict among states or ethnic groups is a probable increase in acts of terrorism by fundamentalists or impoverished radicals driven by hatred of the West, the book argues.

It cites the use of oil pollution and Iraq's destruction of Kuwait's oil wells during the Gulf war as examples of a possible trend towards environmental terrorism.

"All the evidence suggests that terrorism... will be used more, in the Third World and in the West, by all those who want to defend a nationalist or revolutionary cause," Mr. Lellouche says.

Faced with new and changed threats, he says France's 30-year policy of military independence with a national nuclear deterrent is out-of-date and as akin to the anti-tank Maginot Line which failed to stop the 1940 German invasion.

He calls for an enlarged European Community covering all the states from the Atlantic to Poland, with a common defence, a Franco-British nuclear force and a space-based European strategic defence against missiles.

"Despite the removal of the Soviet threat, the post-cold war period threatens to be particularly difficult, especially for our continent," Mr. Lellouche says.

Europe must simultaneously manage the post-Soviet upheaval and the painful economic and political transition of Eastern Europe, resist the economic and technological grip of Japan and the United States and mobilise the necessary resources for peace and development in the Third World.

"The list of challenges is extraordinarily long and difficult," Mr. Lellouche concludes. "We have no choice but to meet them by starting to organise our own continent."

More and more street people in Europe

By Peter Mosley
Reuters

LONDON — The ranks of homeless beggars are growing on the wintry streets of Europe.

Economic strains in the former communist East compounded by recession in the West are pushing up rents and driving the need across national borders in search of elusive riches.

Reuters correspondents in major European capitals report scenes depressingly akin to the misery found in many Third World cities.

In Paris, beggars haunt the streets and the metro. Hundreds of people sleep rough every night on the banks of the Seine and on the boulevards.

France has a socialist government, but homelessness rises despite its promises.

In Rome, economic migrants from Poland and other East European countries swell the colonies of down-and-outs on the streets and piazzas and under the bridges.

In London, right by the National Theatre and the Royal Festival Hall on the Thames lies "cardboard city," a shantytown for derelicts of all ages. Many of them beg coins from the theatre and concert-goers. Thousands more homeless through the streets elsewhere in the capital, an affront to a Conservative government pledged to greater homelessness.

But while the problem is perhaps most conspicuous in Paris, Rome and London, homelessness is also on the rise in affluent cities of Germany.

Estimates of the number of homeless in united Germany range from a few thousand to

650,000. About a third of the homeless in West Germany are from the former East Germany.

The increase is largely due to a sharp rise in housing prices over the last few years. Despite a strong economy, waves of new arrivals from Eastern Germany, East Europeans and asylum seekers have caused an extremely tight housing market in most towns and cities.

Mayors of German towns are required by law to provide shelter for the homeless.

In Frankfurt, where the number of people without a permanent home has risen from 1,500 in 1980 to 3,300 in 1992, the city has set up large heated tents for the homeless in a park near the city centre.

Frankfurt also places several hundred each night in churches and hundreds in low-cost hotels and in other emergency quarters.

Ingo Staymann, head of the Frankfurt Social Office, said drug addicts were swelling the numbers of homeless.

There had also been an alarming increase recently in the number of employed people losing their homes due to high rents.

"There is certainly a homeless problem in Germany, but no one should, in theory, be homeless," said Dieter Hanz, director of the Ministry for families and Senior Citizens in Bonn.

"Everyone is entitled to shelter or assistance in rent payments. The problem is when people do not take advantage of the entitlements."

Even Zurich, that wealthiest of Swiss cities, has its "street people" — mostly drunks or drug addicts.

The leftwing city council recently closed down the notorious

Platzspitz, known as "needle park," where open drug dealing and using was tolerated. They also closed down a pedestrian subway, between the rail station and the opulent shops of Bahnhofstrasse, where drunks slept off their stupor.

The move has driven hard-core addicts back onto the streets. Now police empty syringes if they catch users preparing to inject, then hand them back.

To help cope with the closure of the park and the subway, authorities have opened emergency dormitories with enough room, they say, for all the city's homeless. Sterile syringes are also available.

In elegant Prague, street people, while not entirely non-existent during 40 years of communist rule, were virtually invisible — they kept on the move to avoid arrest.

State companies provided dormitories for seasonal migrant workers without homes. Often these were only "paper jobs" which allowed the companies to collect bigger state subsidies.

Since the fall of communism in 1989, companies have had to cut down payrolls and often close dormitories.

Though official figures for the homeless are unavailable, authorities say the situation is growing worse.

Under communism, charity was a dirty word. Now, Catholic and Protestant charities openly offer shelter and food.

Salvation Army vans hand out soup and two slices of bread four times a week at Prague's main station, the most popular gathering point for street people.

Among the homeless are illegal refugees from poorer East Euro-

pean countries, runaway children and drug addicts. Some live in underground heating ducts in Prague's massive prefabricated satellite cities, others in the night trains or derelict tenement blocks.

In Madrid, a spokesman for the Homeless Watch Charity said the problem was growing in the Spanish capital. "There are more and more young people, more and more immigrants and more women — we're seeing a feminisation of poverty."

Of some 8,000 homeless in Madrid, 1,500 live on the street. The city provides 800 beds in state or church-run hostels.

"We're a safety net for people who are excluded from social protection," said Dario Perez, director of San Isidro State Hostel in Madrid. "But beyond us is a precipice."

One in five of San Isidro's 270 residents are mentally ill somewhat more are drug addicts.

Lisbon's homeless population of about 3,500 tends to concentrate around the elegant Rossio Square in the city centre. They are mostly single men aged 25 to 44, according to a study by a religious charity, but also include a few women and children.

Many are illegal immigrants from Portugal's former African colonies.

Even in Lisbon's relatively mild winter, many street people fall victim to bronchitis and pneumonia. Their life expectancy has been estimated at 40 years.

Statistics show 200,000 people live below the poverty line in Lisbon, a city of 1.5 million.

Many live in the shantytowns that greet visitors arriving at the city's airport.

LETTERS

Foreigners' gharama: The way out

To the Editor:

There are many foreigners in Jordan whose legal period of stay, as visitors or work-seekers, has expired for a long time. Many of them, especially, Asians are very much willing to leave Jordan, but can not do so since they can not pay the huge accumulated overstay penalty (gharama).

The holy month of Ramadan is coming soon. In keeping with the glory and spirit of forgiveness of this month, we appeal to his Majesty's government with his usual magnanimity and feeling for the poor and distressed to declare a general amnesty allowing all categories of persons who are staying in Jordan illegally to leave without paying penalty (gharama) if they leave Jordan during the month of Ramadan.

This will benefit the poor people who want to leave as well as Jordan itself since an exodus of outsiders will reduce the population burden and more job opportunities will be available for Jordanians. An amnesty from His Majesty will also reduce administrative costs needed to deal with illegal residents.

Parvez Ahmad,
P.O. Box 185163,
Amman, Jordan.

Oops, I was going East

To the Editor:

Five hundred years ago Christopher Columbus committed one of the most unpardonable acts in world history: he discovered America.

As he could not have foreseen the consequences of his discovery, may his soul rest in peace.

George Khoury,
Amman, Jordan.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Fourth round of talks begin

(Continued from page 1)

occupied territories. "It just seems to me if that if Israel can afford to spend whether it is one billion or two billions — depending upon whose number you look at — if they can afford to spend that kind of money in the occupied territories, then it seems to me they demonstrate that they do not need \$2 billion a year from us," argued Mr. Obey.

During the hearing Mr. Baker kept his composure and appeared to still resist being dragged into divulging his plans. He refrained, however, from making any statements or implications against Israel and at one point he pointed out that he did not prefer to use the term freezing the settlements activity but that he was seeking a halt to the settlements.

Mr. Baker's emphasis on a halt instead of a freeze seemed consistent with his reported efforts to secure an Israeli consent to stop further growth of the settlements as opposed to effecting a freeze on all construction that is already underway.

A debate over the definition of "freezing the settlements" was sparked by Mr. Obey's argument that there should be "an inclusive suspension" that involves the building of housing units as well as of infrastructure.

Some congressmen strongly objected to a suspension of infrastructure constructions, such as roads, electricity etc., but Mr. Baker appeared to agree with Mr. Obey's definition even though he did not want to use the same terminology.

Israel has 'special torture squad'

(Continued from page 1)

The affidavits were gathered by a Palestinian human rights group. Some of the suspects said they were interrogated by five men who used the Arabic aliases of Lutfi, Nour, Zuhair, Samir and Sassi.

Mr. Meiri said that when he mentioned the Arabic nicknames

of the investigators, his sources gave him the real names of the five. He only published their initials Monday, saying the censor barred him from fully identifying the men.

The reporter said it appeared the squad acted with the blessing of its superiors who are pleased with the sharp increase in confessions.

Lebanon wants to send more troops to south

(Continued from page 1)

of the Hizbollah leader along with his wife and son "unmanly," adding:

"The United States and international Zionists thought they could crush Muslim resistance in Lebanon by assassinating Musawi, being unaware that the golden era of Islam has already dawned and Muslim combatants are determined to continue their struggle."

The Iranian news agency also quoted the headline Tehran daily Salam as saying that "the Zionist regime assassinated the Hizbollah leader, as dictated by the United States."

The Farsi-language daily said Hizbollah had been wrong to release the last six of its British and American hostages last year, because the captives had acted as human shields against U.S. reprisals on the Shiite guerrillas.

Salam said Sheikh Musawi's assassination and the Israeli attacks on Hizbollah had proved the "effectiveness of hostage-taking tactics."

The newspaper, which reflects the thinking of the most anti-Western elements inside the Tehran hierarchy, threatened that "perhaps the next response (by Hizbollah) will be resorting to the successful tactics of the past."

Official silence raises questions

(Continued from page 1)

ethnic and cultural groups for over 70 years. Banning alcohol would interfere with this tradition of tolerance," said.

Many ministers claim that the spirit of tolerance was the basic of last Wednesday's silent reception of the Muslim Brotherhood-initiated resolution. Echoing this attitude, Deputy Prime Minister Thumqan Hindawi summed up the session by saying, "It is the right of every deputy to vote as he sees fit and it is the right of the House to make any recommendations it wishes."

Two of the four ministers who declined to vote in support of the government's stand are members of the 18-member Constitution Bloc in the House. The bloc was a strong opponent of former prime minister Taher Masri for excluding them from his cabinet and observers believe them to be largely responsible for his government's demise three months ago.

The bloc was initially a conglomeration of conservative and traditional politi-

cians, but it later included independent Islamists in its ranks to boost its power and influence in the House and secured four cabinet positions in the government of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, who succeeded Mr. Masri.

Minister of Communications Jamal Sarireb, a member of the Constitution Bloc, and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Atef Butoush, a member of the independent Islamic Bloc, said their vote in favour of the resolution came in line with their "personal conviction."

Minister of Justice Yousef Mbaddeen and Minister of State Sultan Udwan, of the Constitution and National blocs respectively, walked out of the chamber five minutes before the votes were cast.

The two cabinet ministers were joined by seven other deputies who also chose not to cast votes either way. Most of the deputies who left the House floor to avoid voting were members of the 16-member National Bloc or the Constitution Bloc.

Opposition hits changes in Algiers

(Continued from page 1)

and FIS militants demanding resumed elections to achieve an Islamic state.

There has been no reaction from the FIS, many of whose leaders are in jail after violence of last June and early this year.

The FIS claimed Monday that 30,000 people have been arrested by the government, while a human rights group urged the immediate release of detainees held in desert detention camps.

The front said 150 people were killed and 700 were injured in violence since the new government seized power in January.

The Friday Tribune, an FIS newsletter, on Monday published the figures covering the last 30 days. Among the detainees were 200 fundamentalist mayors, 28 regional assembly leaders and 109 deputies elected in the first round of parliamentary voting.

Fundamentalists previously said 14,000 people were detained Feb. 7-14. According to the government, 50 people were killed, 200 injured and 5,000 arrested in the same period.

The newsletter said 43 women arrested in two Algerian towns were among the detainees. It also said former soldiers were also "systematically detained," but provided no details.

The fundamentalists said, without providing details, that among the dead were seven infants under 18 months of age who were smothered by teargas and another infant shot.

One member of Algeria's five-man presidency, former Human Rights Minister Ali Haroun, said 5,000 men were being held in internment camps. Hundreds more have been arrested and charged or already tried, with scores jailed.

Algeria's communists, the avant-garde Socialist Party, termed the government change a step back. It "appears to have been reduced to a useless and dangerous trade between certain spheres of power and the fundamentalist movement," it said.

U.S. demand — a bombshell

(Continued from page 1)

on the settlements.

"The choice is Israel's," Mr. Baker said.

Mr. Baker clashed angrily with Representative Larry Smith, a Florida Democrat, a leading supporter of Israel in Congress.

Pressed by Mr. Smith to explain how he could adopt such a policy while Middle East talks were underway and still claim to be an honest broker, Mr. Baker rejected the supposition.

"Nobody else is asking us for \$10 billion in addition to the \$3 to \$4 billion that we give every year with no strings attached," said Mr. Baker, emphasising every figure to underline the size of the request.

Mr. Smith said he found Mr. Baker's answer "extremely offensive."

Mr. Baker said: "I will determine when I finish my answers, not you."

Mr. Smith: "I hope that someday the American public is going to determine whether you finish the answers. 'Throwing his glasses on the table,' he said: 'It's disgraceful.'"

Mr. Baker spoke a few hours after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir accused Washington of siding with Arabs.

Mr. Shamir said no Israeli government would ever stop Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We cannot under any circumstances go along with the principle that Jews have no right to live in this or that part of the land of Israel," said Mr. Shamir, addressing American-Jewish leaders.

Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon said Monday he had started 22,000 housing units in the occupied territories in less than two years, with another 1,000 starts imminent.

It was the first time Mr. Baker had laid out the U.S. response to Israel's request in public. Israel wants the money to help finance the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

It was also the first time in many years that the United States

has placed political conditions on aid to Israel.

"We will support the loan guarantees of up to \$2 billion for five years if there is a halt or end to settlement activity," Mr. Baker said.

He said he understood that Israel's right-wing government could find that difficult to accept.

"So we've said we would support the provision of loan guarantees of some lesser amount if there was a halt or an end to any new construction activity," Mr. Baker said.

"We would be willing to support loan guarantees without requiring a halt or end to settlement activity with respect to perhaps those units that were under construction, let's say on Jan. 1992."

"If we were to do that we would want to see some sort of a fungibility principle applied... through the deduction of the costs of completion from the loan guarantees," Mr. Baker said.

Mr. Baker said he included in his definition of settlement activity such things as clearing land, building roads and sewers and the like — anything linked to increasing the population of Jewish settlers.

But he also excluded from the construction ban any development undertaken for "security" reasons, such as a defence installation.

"We have a total, absolute and unwavering commitment to the security of Israel," he said.

Mr. Baker said he would insist on leaving final discretion as to what constitutes settlement activity to the Bush administration. If it determines new settlement work is going on after the guarantees go forward, "the United States should have the right to end, terminate, suspend any provision for absorption assistance at that point," he said.

But he said the United States probably would only suspend future guarantees, not seek to reclaim money already loaned as a result of earlier guarantees.

The administration also would determine the frequency and size of inclusions in which the guarantees would be offered, he added.

Mr. Shamir said earlier Arabs opposed loan guarantees because they wanted to halt immigration and wanted to establish a Palestinian state in the occupied territories.

"We know and understand this Arab approach but why and since when does the United States identify with this Arab position," Mr. Shamir told the American Jews. "It is difficult for us to accept it, and we believe that the United States will yet change their policy."

The extent of the drive to settle Jews on occupied land was demonstrated when Yitzhak Rabin, leader of the opposition Labour Party, told the same group that the broad coalition that ruled for more than five years before the current right-wing government had built only 3,500 housing units in occupied territory.

Mr. Rabin, hoping to unseat Mr. Shamir in the June national election, rejected a freeze on settlement but accused the government of building in a deliberate attempt to make a peace agreement impossible.

"The bulk of the money and the bulk of the settlements are not done for the security of Israel but for political reasons, to make sure there will be such an interlock between the Palestinians in the territories and the Israeli settlers that no one will be able to solve it forever," Mr. Rabin said.

Mr. Rabin, a former army chief of staff and defence minister, advocated Jewish settlement be restricted to the "occupied areas" around Jerusalem and along the strategically important weights overlooking the Jordan Valley.

Finance Minister Yitzhak Mordechai expressed optimism Monday that differences with the United States would be worked out.

"I don't think we have been given, at this point, a clear choice between stopping or slowing or whatever the settlements and the loan guarantees," Mr. Mordechai said.

He said Israel was examining "additional ways" of raising money for immigrant absorption should the guarantees not be wrapped up in time for inclusion in Washington's annual foreign aid bill in March.

Washington is worried that both sides in the peace talks will stall until Israeli elections are held June 23.

This round of talks is tentatively scheduled to last through next week.

Negotiations with Lebanon are strained by 10 days of artillery duels between Israeli troops and Arab guerrillas because of Israel's assassination of the leader of Hizbollah, an Iranian-backed movement.

U.N. peace-keepers face host of problems in Yugoslavia

By Timothy Heritage
Reuters

BELGRADE — From dodging minefields to sleeping amid ruins, the United Nations peace-keeping force destined for Yugoslavia faces many difficulties that put its success in doubt.

Yugoslav and western military experts see no alternative to deploying peace-keepers to stop the fighting in Croatia. But they say the plan, adopted by the Security Council on Friday, is hazy and fraught with problems.

"There is a real possibility that this plan will fail," a senior western diplomat said in Belgrade.

About 14,000 peace-keeping troops from 31 countries will arrive in Yugoslavia in the next few weeks after eight months of fighting between Serbs and Croats that has killed at least 6,000 people in Croatia.

Colonel John Wilson, chief of the 75 U.N. military liaison officers already in Yugoslavia, supports the deployment but lists a host of difficulties troops could face when they start arriving in about two weeks.

They include living in tents in devastated towns, a lack of electricity and petrol in some areas, uncharted minefields, deciding exactly where to send troops and what logistical support they need.

Other problems are the high costs which have angered some U.N. members, including the United States, and Croatian doubts about parts of the plan.

Outright opposition to it from Serbs in the Krajina enclave south of the Zagreb has now been dropped and the region's president, Milan Babic, has promised to cooperate.

Col. Wilson says much remains to be worked out with the warring sides but that it is not unusual for such operations to be approved before all details are sorted out.

"I am not unduly worried (about the dangers)," he told reporters on Saturday.

But he added: "Every United Nations peace-keeping force has its own inherent dangers."

The peace-keepers must ensure that the three U.N.-protected zones they will create are demilitarised and that all other

armed forces are withdrawn. They must guarantee that local police forces do not discriminate against minorities.

"The U.N. troops will be lightly armed and will travel in armoured personnel carriers and helicopters. But some Yugoslavs wonder if that protection will suffice."

"There are people who would like to start an incident that could be blamed on the other side," said Milos Vasic, military commentator for the Belgrade weekly Vreme.

Diplomats say the U.N. approved the plan now because Secretary General Boutros Ghali was worried that a ceasefire in force since January 3 could collapse at any time.

Truce violations have increased in the last three weeks, particularly in eastern Croatia.

"The U.N. is taking a calculated political risk. A peace force may be the only way to end this war but you have to decide when the time is right to send it," said a diplomat from a country which is taking part in the force.

Croatia's ambiguous position remains a potential sticking point. The Zagreb government said on Friday that Croatia's laws must be implemented across all the newly independent state.

This statement, provoked by fears that the U.N. presence will confirm Serb-led forces' territorial gains from the fighting, contradicted the U.N.'s proposal for a status quo in areas seized by Serbs until a political solution is found.

Concern over Croatia's stance appeared one of the reasons for a brief visit to Zagreb by German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher on Saturday.

"Adhering to the condition for stationing the peace-keepers is a very important cashment," Mr. Genscher told reporters after meeting Croatian president Franjo Tudjman.

The plan has been accepted by Serbia and Croatia and most diplomats support the principle.

But diplomats in Belgrade that while many Serbian and Croatian leaders have doubts about the plan, they have kept the quiet.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT Tender No. 3/92 — Lubricating Oils (For the second time)

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Financial Markets

Currency	New York Close	Tel Aviv Close
U.S. Dollar	1.7410	1.7350
Deutsche Mark	1.6568	1.6616
Swiss Franc	1.5015	1.5050
French Franc	5.6275	5.6475
Japanese Yen	128.95	129.37
European Currency Unit	1.2355	1.2325

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	4.18	4.25	4.37	4.81
Deutsche Mark	10.18	10.12	10.06	10.03
Swiss Franc	9.50	9.50	9.37	9.25
French Franc	7.43	7.43	7.37	7.31
Japanese Yen	9.87	9.87	9.75	9.66
European Currency Unit	5.31	5.06	4.75	4.75

Commodity	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	350.65	6.75	Silver	4.11
				.090

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6820	0.6840
Deutsche Mark	1.1863	1.1922
Swiss Franc	0.4111	0.4135
French Franc	0.1210	0.1216
Japanese Yen	0.1208	0.1214
Dutch Guilder	0.5270	0.5296
South African Rand	0.3648	0.3666
Italian Lira	0.1133	0.1139
Belgian Franc	0.0547	0.0550
Other Currencies	0.02005	0.02015

Other Currencies

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6820	0.6840
Deutsche Mark	1.1863	1.1922
Swiss Franc	0.4111	0.4135
French Franc	0.1210	0.1216
Japanese Yen	0.1208	0.1214
Dutch Guilder	0.5270	0.5296
South African Rand	0.3648	0.3666
Italian Lira	0.1133	0.1139
Belgian Franc	0.0547	0.0550
Other Currencies	0.02005	0.02015

Other Currencies

Index	22 - 2. 1992 Close	23 - 2. 1992 Close
All-Share	135.92	136.82
Banking Sector	110.36	110.20
Insurance Sector	138.07	137.66
Industry Sector	164.35	161.35
Services Sector	155.27	155.26

Source: 31. 1990 - 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One Sterling	1.7360/70	U.S. dollar
One U.S. dollar	1.1870/75	Canadian dollar
	1.6600/10	Deutsche mark
	1.8685/95	Dutch guilder
	1.5042/52	Swiss franc
	34.14/18	Belgian franc
	5.6510/60	French franc
	1245/1247	Italian lire
	129.40/50	Japanese yen
	6.0160/210	Swedish crowns
	6.5025/75	Norwegian crowns
	6.4350/4400	Danish crowns
One ounce of gold	349.20/349.70	U.S. dollars

Indian government heads into storm over economic reform

NEW DELHI (R) — India's minority government headed into a storm of opposition protest Monday as it pledged to slash spending, overhaul state-run industry and make friends in the long-distrusted West.

Left-leaning parties boycotted parliament and hecklers drowned out President Ramaswamy Venkataraman as he outlined government policy at the start of a crucial session meant to entrench radical economic reforms through a tough budget, due Saturday.

"Changes have been made in industrial, fiscal and trade policies," the president said of Mr. Rao's decision last year, forced by crisis over the country's \$71 billion foreign debt, to slash red tape, devalue the rupee and cut state spending.

"This process of change will continue and will have to be extended to other important sectors of the economy," he said.

The statement made plain Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is intent on ditching both traditional hostility to the United States and the ideals of socialist self-sufficiency which India has pursued since independence from Britain in 1947.

"The values of democracy, individual liberty and respect for human rights which we share with the U.S. provide a strong basis for close cooperation between the two largest democracies in the world," the president said.

"We look forward to a long-term and mutually rewarding economic partnership," he added, flouting a four-decade-old stereotype of Washington as a purveyor of economic imperialism and dirty intelligence tricks.

The debt crisis has combined with the collapse of India's former ally, the Soviet Union, to force the wooing of foreign investors and hard-currency trading partners.

But the president reiterated opposition to U.S.-backed suggestions that India should renounce any nuclear weapon option through a regional agreement including neighboring Pakistan, which has fought three wars with India since independence.

Lebanon devalues lira by 13%

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's central bank permitted an effective devaluation of the Lebanese lira of 13.7 per cent Monday when it closed at 1,000 to the dollar after a three-day market suspension.

Bankers said inter-market activity was virtually normal Monday with demand for the dollar slightly exceeding supply.

The central bank quoted the closing rate of the lira at 1,000 to the dollar Monday, 13.7 per cent up from its close of 879 to the dollar on the last day of trading last Wednesday.

Foreign exchange dealing was suspended due to market uncertainty when the central bank announced it was suspending intervention in the market to allow the lira to float against the dollar and other currencies.

"Unlike expectations, there was no panic. There was normal market activity. Demand was a bit more than the supply but this had little impact," said a senior banker after Monday's close.

The central bank Thursday, Friday and Saturday quoted the closing rate of the lira at 879 to the dollar, but said the rate was "for information" as dealers were reluctant to trade due to the confusion.

Central bank intervention in the past year by selling or buying dollars succeeded in stabilizing the lira at 879 to the dollar by late November.

Inflationary pressures steadily grew with a 120 per cent salary hike for civil servants in January, expectations of a huge budget deficit and lack of substantial foreign financial aid.

Bankers said the central bank's hard currency reserves dropped from \$1.25 billion to about \$800 million as the bank had to dig deep to protect the lira.

They said central bank officials were alarmed by the drop in reserves primarily caused by repeated intervention in the exchange market, and therefore decided a hit to the practice.

Gulf Arab states urged to tax shared water supply

MANAMA, Bahrain (R) — Gulf Arab states should tax water used for agriculture to help conserve rapidly diminishing shared reservoirs which are a potential cause of future conflict, U.N. environment experts said Monday.

Mostafa Tolba, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said in a paper presented to a conference in Bahrain raising water prices would also help cut down wasteful irrigation methods that were ruining the soil.

"This region has a number of water sources... that are shared between two or more countries. With water in such short supply and with demand growing, those shared resources are a potential source of conflict," Mr. Tolba said.

"Conservation is the only option which offers any hope for the future," he said in a paper read to several hundred environmental experts by his deputy, William Mansfield.

Western analysts say countries within the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have the highest per capita rate of water consumption in the world, mainly because of their agriculture programmes.

Most of the drinking water in GCC members Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates comes from Gulf desalination plants while underground reservoirs called aquifers provide the bulk of water used for agriculture.

Tap water is subsidised in all GCC states while water pumped from wells drilled by farmers is normally free.

Saudi Arabia, the world's third largest exporter of wheat, is by far the biggest water consumer and spent a total of \$3.4 billion in agriculture subsidies to its wheat farmers in the last financial year, analysts say.

Mr. Tolba said almost all the aquifers which are being tapped by Gulf farmers were being depleted faster than they could be naturally replenished. Groundwater supplies were also becoming more brackish because of the excessive drawing rate.

Regional experts say groundwater levels are also dropping in most Gulf states as a result of over use.

Mr. Tolba said increasing the amount of water supplied through desalination was not a real option for the region because the economic and the ecological cost was prohibitive.

"Water here is a valuable commodity and if people are asked to pay a fair market price for it, then not only will distortions in the economy be reduced but the ecology of the region will be put onto a more sustainable footing," Mr. Tolba said.

"By pricing water well below market value, many countries... encourage water waste, and the desalination of salt that follows excessive fresh water use in areas of high evaporation," he added.

Mr. Tolba also urged a tax on water used as coolant in the region's industries.

Adel Orabi, UNEP director for West Asia, told Reuters the U.N. body had intended to launch a study of the main Dammam aquifer used by all six GCC states several years ago but was forced to drop the plan after objections by some governments.

He gave no further details. An aquifer management programme was being planned instead, pending approval from the GCC states, he said.

Kuwait reports rising capital flight

KUWAIT (R) — Residents of Kuwait are buying foreign currency and transferring it to safer havens abroad in unusually large and increasing quantities, the governor of the central bank said.

Governor Salem Abdul Aziz Al Sabah told a meeting Sunday evening the outflow of capital started last year and had gathered pace since the beginning of November.

"The capital flight which has begun is alarming us and we feel it is not a normal outflow. Funds have been moving in a manner which is not pleasing," he said.

Sheikh Salem gave no figures but said "the daily rise in the purchase of foreign currency cash has been alarming amounts that are not normal."

The governor said he was baffled by the outflow, given that Kuwait's conditions in Kuwait were favourable and that the country had security pacts with Western countries.

The central bank, which removed all restrictions on foreign currency transfers in August, had been forced in the market to support the dinar, he added.

Among possible reasons, Sheikh Salem cited an imminent overhaul of the banking system and government plans to buy Kuwaiti debt worth about \$1 billion from the country's banks.

He said the central bank was on the alert for any move abroad to exploit the market opportunities.

Another reason added that the high foreign currency cash holdings raised some doubts about investors' intentions.

Some would be depositors moving cash to avoid meeting their obligations to the indebted commercial banks, bankers said.

The cabinet approved the debt-buying plan in December but the partially elected National Council and economists have criticised the scheme on the grounds that it puts too much strain on the treasury.

The crisis argue that the estimated 6,000 debtors have hidden assets outside Kuwait and would pay if taken to court.

The central bank says writing off the bad debts is vital to saving the commercial banks and stimulating the economy, which is still recovering from seven months of occupation.

"If this problem is not solved Kuwait will truly face an economic catastrophe... many depositors would face bankruptcy as a result of the bankruptcy of the banks," Sheikh Salem said last month.

S.P. said Chrysler's financial flexibility should be adequate for at least one to two years, but it warned that the company's "negative cash flow" this year would leave it poorly prepared to meet challenges thereafter.

Ronald Giam, an analyst with Dean Witter Reynolds Inc., noted that Chrysler's finance arm, Chrysler Financial Corp., has \$5.7 billion of debt coming due this year and \$7.6 billion in 1993.

China to raise grain prices to boost production

BEIJING (AP) — China has announced that it will boost the state purchase price for corn and rice to encourage more grain production to feed the nation's growing population.

The official Xinhua news agency said the higher prices approved by the state council, China's cabinet, will take effect with this year's harvest. The report did not say what the new prices would be.

The state council increased the purchase price for wheat last October, Xinhua said.

Most of the China's grain is sold to the state under contracts that farmers individually sign each spring. After fulfilling their contract obligations, farmers can sell anything they produce over that on the small free market.

Usually free market prices are higher than the state price. But a bumper harvest in 1990 caused free-market prices to fall, which discouraged grain production last year.

Severe flooding last year resulted in the loss of more than 25 billion kilograms of grain in China, dealing another blow to the country's efforts to increase grain output each year.

The grain losses from flooding prompted the central government to urge people to consume grain sparingly, reflecting growing concerns that China is losing the struggle to produce enough food for its population of 1.1 billion.

China's grain harvest last year was expected to total 415 million to 425 million tonnes down from the record harvest of 435 million tonnes in 1990.

China expects to have 1.25 billion people by the end of this decade, and officials say 500 million to 520 million tonnes of grain will be needed each year to feed the population.

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

TOKYO — Stocks surrendered most of Friday's gains on index-linked selling and profit-taking. Brokers said a weaker yen also hit sentiment. The Nikkei average lost down 318.57 points to 20,973.24.

SYDNEY — The market closed at its high after a shaky start. The All Ordinaries Index closed 5.5 points up at 1627.0, its highest for over a month.

HONG KONG — Share prices ended easier on blue chip profit taking but selective demand was seen for second liners. The Hang Seng ended 20.85 down at 4,715.62.

SINGAPORE — Shares prices eased over a broad front although late bargain hunting helped the market close off the day's lows. The STI ended at 1,515.01 down 4.04.

LONDON — The FTSE index gained 17.4 to 2,559.7 despite disappointment that the Bank of England had not lowered interest rates.

NEW YORK — The market showed little reaction to a General Motors restructuring plan. At 1647 GMT the Dow Jones Industrials were down 5.28 to 3,274.37.

Egypt freezes investment in public sector

ISMAILIA, Egypt (R) — Egypt has stopped investing in new public enterprises to concentrate on restructuring its debt-burdened state sector, a senior official said Sunday.

The executive director of the General Investment Authority (GIA), Mohamed Ghannam, told a public meeting President Hosni Mubarak had rejected any new investment by the state in economic projects when chairing a GIA meeting last month.

Mr. Ghannam told students at Suez Canal University that "Mubarak refused entry or participation by the public sector in any new investment projects, stressing that the public sector... should scale down its activities."

Egypt is due to name new managers this month to oversee the reform or privatisation of hundreds of companies in the public sector as part of economic reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

The Jan. 28 meeting approved 107 projects involving a total investment of about 4.20 billion Egyptian pounds (\$1.27 billion). Mr. Ghannam said ceilings on foreign investment had been removed and all import restrictions would be lifted within 18 months.

Ukraine promises civilised rules on new currency

BRUSSELS (R) — Senior officials from the Ukraine and Russia have agreed on a draft set of civilised rules to limit the economic damage which could be caused by the introduction of a separate Ukrainian currency later this year.

Volodymyr Hrynov, the deputy president of the Ukrainian Parliament, and Vladimir Shumeiko, the deputy chairman of the Russian Parliament, told a news conference that the proposed "code of conduct" was not a formal agreement but would be put to their respective governments.

"We have no doubt at all that this communique will be taken and adopted in the framework of the introduction of our own currency," Mr. Hrynov said.

"I am sure that it can be signed officially," added Mr. Shumeiko. The Ukraine has said it will break away from the ruble with its own currency sometime during 1992, raising fears that the two states will descend further into chaos.

Western experts have been prodding the two sides at a series of conferences in Europe over the last few months to the least agree some basic rules to prevent a total breakdown of ties.

Chrysler raises \$862 m in stock offering

DETROIT (R) — Chrysler Corp. has completed an \$862.5 million stock offering, raising cash badly needed to develop new cars and modernise its plants.

The stock sale puts the car company on sound financial footing for the next year or two, analysts said. But beyond that, Chrysler's survival as an independent company is widely seen to depend on the success of its newest models and a turnaround in the depressed auto market.

The successful sale of the preferred shares, which can be converted into common stock, raised more than twice Chrysler's initial target of \$400 million. It spurred rating agency Standard & Poor's Corp. to upgrade the car company's outlook to stable from negative.

S.P. said Chrysler's financial flexibility should be adequate for at least one to two years, but it warned that the company's "negative cash flow" this year would leave it poorly prepared to meet challenges thereafter.

Ronald Giam, an analyst with Dean Witter Reynolds Inc., noted that Chrysler's finance arm, Chrysler Financial Corp., has \$5.7 billion of debt coming due this year and \$7.6 billion in 1993.

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2nd Commonwealth soldier killed in Azeri shelling of Karabakh

Velayati to start mediation tour

MOSCOW (R) — Servicemen of a Commonwealth regiment in Nagorno-Karabakh protested to their commanders Monday after a second soldier died from wounds inflicted by Azeri shelling. ITAR-TASS News Agency said.

The 366 Motorized Rifle Division, deployed in Stepanakert, capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, came under fire from the Azeri stronghold of Shusha Sunday. Ten soldiers were wounded, and one died instantly, TASS said. The other died later and two more were "on the verge of death."

Six local citizens were killed separately and 35 wounded Sunday when 145 Azeri rockets hit mainly Armenian-populated Stepanakert, the agency said. It quoted a local police spokesman as saying men of the 366 regiment had protested over the deaths, implying they wanted the right to shoot back when under fire.

"The men of the regiment have openly expressed dissatisfaction at the actions of their commanders, who observe neutrality when Azeri units fire not only at the local population but at servicemen taking no part in the conflict," TASS quoted the spokesman as saying.

The report followed a formal protest to Azerbaijan Sunday by the Commonwealth's Transcaucasian Command.

Troops of the former Soviet army have vowed to stay out of regional conflicts hot command and politicians on all sides worry they could be drawn into ethnic warfare.

Azerbaijan and Armenia, both members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, are locked in a bloody feud over Karabakh, a predominantly Armenian enclave administered by Azerbaijan.

More than 1,000 people have died in four years of fighting. Each side accuses the CIS command of taking part in the conflict or providing weapons and support to the other. CIS commanders deny the charges.

Meanwhile Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, armed forces commander of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), has said the former Soviet army was under control and dismissed suggestions there might be a coup.

In a television interview, broadcast after a day of hardline Communist protests on Armed Forces Day, he said it was not for the military to take political decisions.

"Those who think that way... should understand that we now live in another world," Marshal Shaposhnikov said.

Asked if he excluded the possibility of a coup, he replied: "According to the information at my disposal, the situation in the

army is under control."

Marshal Shaposhnikov added: "The situation is more complicated, and I want to say this bluntly on television, in the Transcaucasian area."

"When Azerbaijan declared it was forming its own army, many (former Soviet) officers could not understand this. Probably, they will not show any desire to serve in that army inasmuch as it smells strongly of the danger they could be used... in inter-ethnic conflicts."

Azerbaijan, along with Ukraine and Moldova, declared at a recent CIS summit that it would not join any joint Commonwealth forces but would form its own army.

A separate development, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was expected to leave for Azerbaijan and Armenia Monday to mediate in their bloody dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, Tehran Radio reported.

Mr. Velayati's mission follows warnings of full-scale war in Transcaucasia where fighting started again in Karabakh despite a ceasefire declared Thursday after Moscow's mediation.

Iran last week offered to mediate in the conflict between its two newly independent neighbours which has killed more than 1,000 people since 1988.

"Mr. Velayati... will travel to Azerbaijan and Armenia today

for talks with their leaders towards a just and peaceful solution to this dispute which overshadows the interests of all nations in the region, especially Muslims," Tehran Radio said.

It hoped for the mission's success "in view of Iran's direct and well-intentioned influence among the nations of the region and the necessity of averting a disastrous war..."

Mr. Velayati's mission would give Iran a prominent peacemaking role in the Asian ex-Soviet republics to add to its persistent drive to forge economic and cultural relations with them.

Azerbaijan and four other Muslim members of the Commonwealth of Independent States joined Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), a regional economic pact, in a Tehran meeting last week.

Iranian leaders pressed their concern about the Karabakh fighting to Azeri President Ayaz Mutalibov, who attended the ECO meeting, and Armenian Foreign Minister Raffi Hovhannysyan, who visited Tehran earlier this month.

Iran has long-standing cultural links with both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Shiite Muslim Azeris are the second biggest ethnic group in Iran after Persians. Christian Armenians form a much smaller community.



Serbian volunteers patrol the frontline near Vinkovci, in Croatia, where the most serious ceasefire violation have taken place

Row deepens over Yugoslav army presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina

BELGRADE (R) — Muslim and Croatian officials in Bosnia-Herzegovina called Monday for the Yugoslav army to withdraw, deepening a row in the volatile republic ahead of a vote next weekend on independence from Yugoslavia.

Their demands contradicted statements by Yugoslav, Serbian and military leaders that the Serb-led army will not pull out and were sure to outrage Serbs — who form the third main national group in the central republic and oppose independence.

"If Yugoslavia does not exist any more, there can be no Yugoslav army," Miro Lasic, a senior member of the Bosnian branch of the Croatian Democratic Union

(HDZ), told Reuters by telephone.

Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister Mahmut Cehajic, a Muslim, was quoted by the Belgrade-based Tanjug News Agency as saying the army should pull out after the referendum next Saturday and Sunday.

"The Yugoslav People's Army has to leave Bosnia-Herzegovina after it proclaims its independence, and if it does not do so, we will regard it as occupying force," he said in an interview reported by Tanjug.

Mr. Cehajic could not immediately be reached for comment. The Yugoslav army has tens of

thousands of soldiers in Bosnia. Many are close to the border with Croatia, where the army has backed Serb irregular forces in fighting against Croatian militia for almost eight months.

Their presence has triggered street protests in Bosnia, mainly by Croats and Muslims angered by rowdy Serbian reservists, but Yugoslav leaders refuse to withdraw the troops.

"I will never sign the decision on a withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from Bosnia-Herzegovina," Borisav Kodric, acting head of the four-man state presidency which has supreme command of the armed forces, said earlier this month.

Opposition triumphs in Bucharest polls

BUCHAREST (R) — Romania's centrist opposition changed Bucharest's political landscape in weekend local elections by restoring key constituencies from the ruling party, unofficial results showed Monday.

City officials said 14-party Democratic Convention (DC) had captured at least five of the capital's six sectors, winning more than 55 per cent of votes compared to an average of 43 per

cent by the ruling National Salvation Front (NSF).

The DC victory marked the most dramatic political shift in Bucharest since the NSF, headed by former Communists, won a two-third majority in national elections in May 1990.

"This is the moment when one-party domination of Romania's political life has ceased," DC leader Radu Campeanu told Reuters.

"I am sure our victory in Bucharest will have a decisive impact on both the rest of the country and the outcome of the future parliamentary and presidential elections, due within three months," he added.

DC candidate Ciriak Alacu, an engineer, won the title of city mayor with 55 per cent — 11 per cent more than his main rival, prominent NSF politician Cazimir Ionescu.

NATO chief discusses arms control in Moscow

MOSCOW (Agencies) — NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner, on his first visit to the new Commonwealth of Independent States, met Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev Monday to discuss cooperation with the alliance, news agencies said.

The two-hour meeting covered a wide range of topics, including arms controls, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, European problems and the so-called "brain-drain" of Soviet scientists.

The ITAR-TASS News Agency quoted Mr. Kozyrev as saying Russia was not seeking immediate entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). For now, he said, the Russian Foreign Ministry "will be working to create specific mechanisms

of cooperation."

Mr. Kozyrev said preparation for a summit meeting in the framework of the NATO Cooperation Council was discussed during the meeting. The meeting was set to be held in Brussels on March 10.

NATO founded the council last December to strengthen political and military links among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Mr. Woerner was scheduled to meet with Russian President Boris Yeltsin Tuesday, a delegation official said.

2 sides agree to restore democracy in Haiti

WASHINGTON (R) — Haitian lawmakers and ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide reached a deal Sunday to restore democracy in the Caribbean nation and return Mr. Aristide to power, Organisation of American States (OAS) sources said.

The agreement calls for Mr. Aristide's reinstatement and for the general who headed the revolt to remain in his post, they said.

"It's all here," the sources quoted an exultant Mr. Aristide as saying as he waved a copy of the agreement. He had met in three-day marathon talks with representatives of the regime installed after he was ousted in a Sept. 30 coup.

"The two sides agree to restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide in his post as constitutionally elected president of the Republic of Haiti," said the agreement, written in French.

But the document did not give a date for Mr. Aristide's return, the sources added.

The agreement was only made possible after Mr. Aristide, the first freely elected president in Haiti's history, finally gave up his insistence that Gen. Raoul Cedras, who headed the coup, be removed as army chief.

The document was signed by Mr. Aristide, Senate Speaker Jean Belizaire and House Speaker Alexandre Medard, who represented the post-coup regime in the talks, and OAS Secretary-General Joao Baena Soares.

Mr. Baena Soares said Mr. Aristide must accept the decisions made by the parliament after the coup.

Gen. Cedras's three-year mandate as army chief was ratified by Haiti's parliament after Mr. Aristide was forced into exile in Caracas.

The agreement crowned three days of marathon closed-door talks during which little details of the discussions emerged.

The talks were called for by the OAS, which immediately after the coup clamped a trade embargo on the impoverished Caribbean nation to press for Mr. Aristide's return. The organisation has been mediating the conflict ever since.

Sunday's agreement says the two parts agree to call for an end to the embargo.

Opposition threatens Aquino with lawsuit

MANILA (R) — A Philippine opposition party Monday accused President Corason Aquino of using government funds to campaign for his favoured successor in May elections and threatened to sue her.

Mrs. Aquino, who is not standing for re-election, has endorsed the candidacy of former Defence Secretary Fidel Ramos and in her provincial tours has urged voters to back her choice.

In a trip Sunday to the central province of Cebu where she asked residents to vote for Gen. Ramos.

A spokesman for a faction of the Nationalista Party headed by Mrs. Aquino's estranged Vice-President Salvador Laurel said party lawyers were preparing charges against Mrs. Aquino for "illegal use of public funds, government equipment and facilities for the campaign of Ramos."

Mrs. Aquino denied the allegation.

Honecker enters hospital in Moscow

MOSCOW (R) — Erich Honecker, the former East German leader at the centre of a diplomatic tug-of-war, was moved to a Moscow hospital Monday after nearly 11 weeks sheltering in the Chilean embassy.

Staff at the renowned Botkin Institute reported that Mr. Honecker, 79, said by his wife to be suffering from cancer, had checked into its diplomatic wing.

A duty nurse, speaking shortly after his arrival, said: "His condition is normal."

Germany wants the hardline

Communist refugee sent back to face charges over the killing of east Germans trying to flee to the west during his 1971-89 rule.

Chile, sympathetic to his plight because of east Germany's warm welcome to Chilean leftist exiles after the 1973 military coup, wants him allowed to travel to Santiago.

Germany, the biggest foreign investor in Russia, says it has a commitment from President Boris Yeltsin's government that Mr. Honecker will be extradited. "We expect that at the earliest

possible opportunity, when his condition allows, he will be returned to Germany," embassy spokesman Enno Barker said Monday.

But Chile's acting foreign minister said Friday that the Russians had promised to restore Mr. Honecker to the embassy when he left hospital.

Mr. Honecker's wife Margot, an education minister in his government, says he has cancer and kidney troubles. Chile says he is very ill and needs a liver biopsy and probably an operation.

Pope urges peace, stability for Liberia

BANJUL (R) — Pope John Paul II Monday called for an end to the civil war in Liberia and praised West African states trying to restore peace and stability to that devastated country.

In an address before leaving Gambia for Guinea, the last stop on his eight-day West African tour, the Pope also called on rich nations to begin a "new era of solidarity with Africa."

"It is clear that the international community has a grave moral duty to implement just and helpful policies in relation to this continent," he told Gambian

President Dawda Jawara at the end of a one-day visit.

"In the name of our shared humanity and on behalf of those without a voice, I renew my appeal to those governments in a position to help and to international organisations to hurry to Africa's side in this decisive hour," he said.

A keynote theme of the Pope's three-nation tour, which began in Senegal Wednesday, has been that the West should not forget Africa while it turns its attention to the changes in Eastern and

Central Europe.

The Pope recalled that the bloody civil war in Liberia had forced him to cancel a trip there last year.

"A terrible fratricidal war has ravaged that country and caused immeasurable suffering among its people," he said.

"I am deeply disturbed by the plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees, and so many homeless and hungry people."

"Such a situation destroys any chance of economic development and political stability for the peoples involved," he said.

Bush trounces Buchanan in Maine but has setback

PORTLAND, Maine (R) — President George Bush trounced Republican challenger Patrick Buchanan in the Maine caucus, but his success was overshadowed by a poll showing most Americans doubt he will be re-elected.

Democratic front-runner Paul Tsongas kept his presidential hopes alive.

With six per cent of the vote in Maine left to be tabulated he was only fractionally ahead of outsider Jerry Brown who reaped the reward of a vigorous campaign.

Mr. Bush, weakened largely by a stagnant economy, badly needed a heavy win in the Maine caucus to re-assert the validity of his quest for a second-four-year term in the Nov. 3 presidential election.

Mr. Buchanan, a right-wing newspaper columnist and television commentator, badly jolted the White House by taking 37 per cent of the Republican vote in the New Hampshire primary.

In Maine, Mr. Bush flattened Mr. Buchanan, taking more than 90 per cent of the vote.

But the edge was taken off the victory by a Newsweek poll that found only 44 per cent of Americans think Mr. Bush is very likely to be re-elected.

On the Democratic side, Mr. Tsongas, a former U.S. senator from Massachusetts, had 29.7 per cent to the 29.3 per cent of Mr. Brown, a former California governor.

Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton was third with 15.3 per cent, with 15.6 per cent uncommitted. Iowa Senator Tom Harkin got 5.2 per cent and Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey 3.1 per cent. Both

conceded they could not win in Maine and concentrated instead on Tuesday's primary in South Dakota.

Speaking after the Democratic candidates' debate in South Dakota, Mr. Tsongas said the Maine results "suggest that we're all going to be here for a while."

Mr. Brown called the Maine voting "a response to the fact that regular Americans have lost power to corruption, careerism and campaign consultants."

"It's very hard to respond to a system that builds obscene war chests in political campaigns and continues politics as business as usual," he added.

At stake in the caucuses were only 0.5 per cent of the delegates to the Democratic presidential nominating convention and one per cent of the Republican delegates.

Only Mr. Brown campaigned vigorously in Maine, whose voters are among the Democratic Party's most liberal.

But even as campaign aides said Mr. Brown's showing made him a "real" candidate, they conceded that he needed to win a state soon and could not point to where that might be.

Democratic candidates were already looking beyond Maine even before the results were in. Eleven states, about half in the south, hold votes March 10, known as "super Tuesday."

The south is crucial to Mr. Clinton, who must do well in his native region, and to Mr. Bush, since Mr. Buchanan has targeted Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and Oklahoma as states he means to fight for.

COLUMN

Indian skip-runs 35 km to beat his record

BANGALORE (AP) — An Indian skipper ran 35 kilometres through crowded streets Sunday, twice the distance he covered in a previous record, an official said. Vadivelu Karanukaran, 32, covered the distance using a jump rope in 2 hours, 26 minutes and 27 seconds, said Adhip Chaudhuri, home secretary in the Karnataka state government. The event was recorded in the presence of officials from the Guinness Book of World Records. Mr. Chaudhuri said Mr. Karanukaran's previous record, a 16-kilometre skip-run in 58 minutes in the southern city of Madras in 1990, is mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records 1991. It was his first record in the skip-run event. Mr. Karanukaran, a ticket collector in the Indian Railways, said he hoped to help raise funds for spastics in India through his new feat.

Paula Abdul, Emilio Estevez engaged

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pop singer Paula Abdul and actor Emilio Estevez recently became engaged, a spokesman said. "We are completely in love and happy to have found each other," the pair said in a statement released through the singer's publicist, Eliot Sekuler. No date has been set for their marriage. It will be the first for both. Miss Abdul, 29, has been on tour following the release of her Spellbound album, featuring the hit singles Blowing Kisses in the Wind, Rush Rush and Vibeology. Her previous album was the popular Forever Your Girl. Estevez, 29, son of actor Martin Sheen, currently is starring in the feature film Freejack. His previous credits include The Breakfast Club, St. Elmo's Fire, Repo Man and the Young Guns movies.

Rambo shows soft side in French award ceremony

PARIS (R) — The macho man of American cinema, Sylvester Stallone, revealed a surprisingly soft side when the French Culture Ministry decorated him for his contribution to the arts. Dressed in a sharp black suit and armed with a long emotional speech, Stallone cut a very different figure from the bare-torsoed, monosyllabic killing machine he portrayed in the hit Rambo films of the 1980s. "I find it incredible to come to France and to be understood and appreciated so fully, it just makes my heart so incredibly special," Stallone gushed after Culture Minister Jack Lang made him an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters. Stallone's films are not usually thought of as jewels of world culture. But Mr. Lang, who last week decorated the dark angel of U.S. rock music, Lou Reed, made no apologies for the award. In characteristically flamboyant if inscrutable style, he described Stallone as "a little boy with big dreams, an extroverted angel in the service of a papier mache God." Stallone, 45, who first came to prominence as the fiercely ambitious boxer Rocky, has recently been trying to shed his image as Hollywood's high priest of mindless violence by branching out into comedy — so far without box office success.

Elizabeth Taylor says her survival is a miracle

NEW YORK (R) — On the eve of her 60th birthday, actress Elizabeth Taylor appeared on television wearing skintight jeans, boots and a studded leather motorcycle jacket saying it was a miracle she was still alive. "It's kind of a miracle that I'm going to be 60. I almost died a couple of times," said Ms. Taylor, who also wore a silver crucifix when she appeared on NBC's Tonight Show. "I'm a living example of what people can go through and survive. I've had the lowest valleys, the highest highs, tragedies, additions. 'I am a survivor,' said Taylor, who made her screen debut at the age of 10. Throughout her life she has made headlines over her eight marriages, weight problems and battles with drugs and alcohol. The London-born actress said she would celebrate her birthday next Thursday "with a party for the child in me." I've been pronounced dead. I read my own obituary. It was the best review I'd ever had," she said. Ms. Taylor said her marriage last year to building worker Larry Fortensky was a happy one and that their relationship was "very private and profound."